



THE INDEPENDENT

N° 3,269

SATURDAY 12 APRIL 1997

WEATHER: Mainly dry

(IR65p) 60p

What Walt Disney found in Lincolnshire
the long weekend

New truths about David Hockney
The Magazine

Staying in or going out: what's hot next week
The eye

How IRA plotted to switch off London

Jason Bennetto
Crime Correspondent

An IRA team planned an elaborate multiple bomb attack to knock out the electricity supply across London and substantial parts of the South-East for months, the Old Bailey heard yesterday. But the terrorist plot, which would have blacked out millions of homes and businesses, was foiled by a joint police and MI5 operation, members of the jury were told.

Thirty-seven explosive devices were recovered in police raids in which seven alleged members of an active terrorist unit, including a former US Marine, were arrested.

The IRA cell intended to blow up six electrical sub-stations last July as part of an elaborate scheme to bring chaos to the British mainland, the prosecution claimed. An eighth man was

Mr Sweeney said: "Had the conspiracy succeeded, it would have resulted in serious and widespread loss of electricity to London and the South-East."

"Supplies to consumers would have been affected over a considerable period", he said.

The jury heard that all the defendants, except Clive Brampton, are accused of being IRA members who came to London from the Republic with false identities and £24,000 in cash, which was used to rent a lock-up garage in Wimbledon, south-west London, and three safe houses, in Tooting and Peckham, in south London, and near Wandsworth, south-west London.

They researched their intended targets and reconnected at least five of the sub-stations. By crippling the six sub-stations, which channel almost all the electricity used in the London area and parts of the Home Counties, the city's power would be knocked out for a considerable period. The sub-stations were named as Amersham Main, Buckinghamshire; Elstree, Waltham Cross, in Hertfordshire; Rayleigh Main, in Essex; Canterbury North, in Kent and West Weybridge, in Surrey.

However, while the IRA men were carrying out their work, they were being secretly watched by officers from the Metropolitan Police, MI5, and the West Midlands Police, the court heard.

In the early hours of 15 July last year, Metropolitan police raided three premises in London. At both the Tooting and Peckham addresses officers found "a mass of incriminating evidence", the jury was told. At a basement in Peckham this included 37 part-made "time and power units", said Mr Sweeney.

The only parts missing from the devices were the 2.5kg of Semtex explosives and detonators. Each unit could be set to explode up to 100 hours in advance.

Mr Sweeney said evidence recovered included fake identifications, large amounts of cash, maps and research about the electricity network.

To attack the sub-stations, he claimed the IRA cell had brought six pairs of extendable ladders, bolt cutters, and crow bars.

The prosecution will argue that Mr Gannon obtained a map of the electricity network from the annual Electricity Supply Handbook which he took from Battersea public library in London. Mr Brampton was arrested in Birmingham by West Midlands police on the same day as the seven defendants in London.

The trial, which is expected to last up to eight weeks, continues on Monday.



Willie Little Child, honorary chief of the Canadian Indian Cree tribe, came to London to see the Queen yesterday, writes *Janet Marks*. But the Queen was busy, so he and other tribal elders staged a prayer ceremony in traditional costume outside the gates of Buckingham Palace.

The Indian and Inuit peoples of Canada are concerned about a possible European Union ban on the import of products made from the fur of trapped animals. While international sentiment has turned against the fur trade, they argue that their communities are dependent on it.

The delegation had hoped to ask the Queen to honour a treaty signed by Queen Victoria in 1906 in which she guaranteed the fur-trapping rights of indigenous Canadian peoples.

Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

Supplies to consumers would have been affected over a considerable period, for months or more

hired to provide fake identifications and find premises in the Birmingham area where a lorry could be secretly unloaded, the court heard.

The trial is the first to involve alleged IRA action since the ceasefire was shattered by the Docklands bomb in east London in February 1996.

Donald Gannon, 33, Gerard Hanratty, 37, Martin Murphy, 38, Patrick Martin, 34, Robert Morrow, 36, Francis Rafferty, 44, and John Crawley, 39, all from Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, and Clive Brampton, 36, from Birmingham, deny conspiring to cause explosions likely to endanger life or cause serious injury to property.

The court heard that Mr Crawley, an Irish-American, was a US Marine from 1975 until 1979. He was in a battalion which specialised in map reading and demolition, using explosives. The alleged IRA team was able to get details about the sub-stations, which are owned by the National Grid Group, from a library book which included map of the system.

Nigel Sweeney, prosecuting, said the IRA unit had intended to carry out the co-ordinated attacks last summer.

Major writes a blank cheque to Eurosceptics

Anthony Bovins
Political Editor

John Major yesterday offered Tory Ministers and candidates a blank cheque to oppose the European single currency, after he defended the right of a Minister to oppose the loss of sovereignty.

Angela Browning, an Agriculture Minister who has been in the thick of the BSE crisis, said in a campaign leaflet to the voters of Tiverton and Honiton that the euro would end the sovereignty of the nation state, and, as such, she would not support it.

She said the loss of sovereignty was threatened by a transfer of gold and currency reserves to the European Central Bank in Frankfurt.

But Mrs Browning pointed out that as the Conservative manifesto promised the Tories would not allow any further reduction in sovereignty, she was in step with party policy.

"That remarkable view - a direct breach of the Government's wait-and-see line decided by Cabinet on 23 January - was then endorsed by Mr Major, who made light of it at his daily press conference."

However, he said only last month that ministers would not be allowed to

break the line, and Labour and the Liberal Democrats were quick to attack the Prime Minister's retreat.

Mr Major, who used his press conference to attack Tony Blair's "white flag" policy towards the Social Chapter and the Working Time Directive, said: "I expect ministers to support the Conservative manifesto."

"If they didn't support what was in our manifesto, I do not believe they would have remained in the Government over the last few months."

As Mrs Browning pointed out in a BBC radio interview, the manifesto says not only that the Government would negotiate and then decide on single currency entry, but also that: "We will not accept other changes to the Treaty that would further centralise decision-making, [or] reduce national sovereignty."

Clearly enjoying Mr Major's support, the junior minister said in her Devon constituency last night that she was engaging in healthy and democratic debate. "We're not some Stalinist party like New Labour," she said.

But the debate was spreading across the length and breadth of the party, with other ministers threatening to break ranks and defy the Cabinet line. In a BBC radio *World at One* inter-

view, William Hague, the Cabinet minister who has been designated as a firefighting spokesman, said: "All candidates should be able to air their views in their election address. I would have thought that was a basic principle of parliamentary democracy."

Gordon Brown, the shadow Chancellor, said last night: "The Tories are now in chaos on the single currency. Mr Major's attempts to contain the revolt in his party have already fallen apart. He is being defied within his own Cabinet."

More ominous for Mr Major was the silence of Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whose support for the 23 January wait-and-see agreement was critical in keeping the Conservative Party together.

Paddy Ashdown, leader of the Liberal Democrats, said last night: "If the Prime Minister fails to move against the defiance of the 'No Surrender' Tories, he will have effectively surrendered the leadership of his party to the Euro-sceptics."

Last night, senior Tories said they feared that the Tory truce could break apart - just as Labour's delicate pact over unilateral nuclear disarmament cracked open during the 1983 general election campaign.

election '97
Paisley pact aims to see off Sinn Fein
Election countdown, pages 10-14
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Tina Brown and Harry Evans raise funds for Labour in the Big Apple, page 21

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QUICKLY
Hit-team green light
The hit-team whose Berlin murder trial has caused a rupture between Europe and Iran were acting under a "green light" from an Iranian Revolutionary Guard committee. Page 18

Calvi answers in sight
For 15 years the mystery of the Italian banker Roberto Calvi's death has been left hanging, much like his body found dangling from Blackfriars Bridge. At last, something approaching a final answer is at hand. Page 15

Rapist schoolboy
A schoolboy was found guilty yesterday of taking part in the gang rape of an Austrian tourist who was attacked and then thrown naked into a canal to drown. Page 4

Scientists magnetised by levitating frog

Charles Arthur
Science Editor

Take one extremely powerful magnet, and one slightly surprised but compliant frog, put one on top of the other, and what do you get? A levitating frog, according to British and Dutch scientists who carried out the experiment.

It might sound like sleight of hand, but the team from the University of Nottingham and the University of Nijmegen have repeated it with grasshoppers, fish and plants - and they say it could work with humans too. One scientist in the US is already looking at a millennium

project to build a magnet strong enough to levitate a volunteer 100 metres.

"We tried it because we thought it would work," said Peter Main of Nottingham's physics department. "It was actually the idea of Andre Geim, of the University of Nijmegen. We had seen superconductors with magnets levitating above them. This is the same effect."

The frog was lifted by a magnetic field of 16 tesla, about a million times more powerful than the Earth's natural magnetic field, and about six times more powerful than that of Magnetic Resonance Imaging scanners used in hospitals.

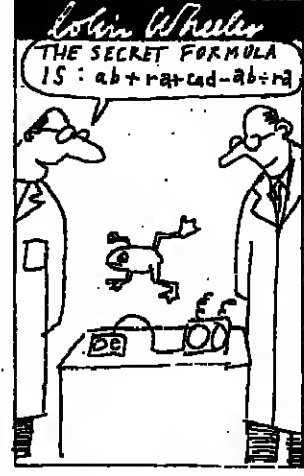
"The important issue is your density - the force you feel is related to your volume, so the less dense, the better," said Professor Main. "Frogs have a density about equal to water - as do people. It works because it actually distorts the electron orbits in the frog's atoms; that generates a tiny electric current, which generates a magnetic field in the opposite direction from the main magnet."

Is that potentially harmful to humans or frogs? "It did try to escape by scrambling off to the side. But it went back to its fellow frogs looking perfectly happy," said Professor Main. "It must be a very strange

sensation, though, being weightless. It's not a surface effect, like floating in water, though you might feel internal tidal effects."

Lifting a human would require a magnet several metres across, though it would not have to produce a more intense magnetic field. "You would have to be lying down, rather than standing. It might cost about £1m."

There are serious applications too for the discovery: it could form a low-cost test bed for chemicals and systems which will be used in space. "It's a lot less expensive than sending a rocket up," said Professor Main.



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significant shorts

Britain to dig in heels over EU fishing-fleet cuts

Britain will refuse to co-operate with plans to cut back the European Union's fishing fleets when fisheries ministers meet in Luxembourg on Monday, the Fisheries minister Tony Baldry said yesterday.

The Government's policy is to have nothing to do with the fleet cuts – seen as an essential way of reducing over-fishing – until "quota hopping" by foreign-owned and -crewed boats ends. The quota hoppers, nearly all Spaniards or Dutch, have purchased British vessels and fishing licences giving them a right to a large part of the United Kingdom fish quota in the Channel and North Sea, and their catch is mostly landed overseas. Britain is expecting to be left isolated at the Council of Ministers meeting on Monday and Tuesday while the other fisheries ministers make progress on agreeing fleet cuts. The Government's view is that the quota hopping crisis can only be sorted out by changing the EU's founding Treaty in the Intergovernmental Conference talks, due to climax in Amsterdam in June.

Nicholas Schoon

Man dies in gas explosion

One person died and two others were taken to hospital yesterday, when an explosion ripped through a gas cylinder plant on an industrial estate.

Emergency services evacuated the south-west London business park and nearby housing estate after fire raged through the factory, owned by the British Oxygen Company. BOC Gases later identified the dead man as employee Anthony Mulry, 29, who was married and lived in Surrey. Bob Pire, spokesman for the company, said the company "deeply regretted" his death. He added: "The explosion occurred during a routine gas cylinder filling process ... nothing like this has ever happened before. It was a freak occurrence."

Nicola Veash

Face-to-face with terrorism



A businesswoman told yesterday how she rushed to the aid of the policeman gunned down by the IRA and came face-to-face with the horror of terrorism.

Miriam Collins, 40, was in her office above Londonderry's courthouse when RUC constable Alice Collins (left, on relation) was shot in the back by an IRA sniper on Thursday. Together with police officers she tried to tend the injured woman's wounds. Miriam

Collins said yesterday: "I'm appalled that I have had to come face-to-face with evil." "I was in my office upstairs when I heard the bang. I ran down and I saw Alice lying on the ground with one of her colleagues trying to assist her ... Alice neither moved nor spoke."

£100,000 for nanny kept as slave

A nanny who was treated as a slave by her employers was yesterday awarded £100,000 in High Court damages against the couple who fed her scraps and made her sleep outside like a dog.

Nigerian-born Helen Samuels was whipped with knotted electrical flex, beaten with high-heeled shoes and starved to a weight of six stone. Deputy Judge Nigel Wilkinson QC said she had been "treated as so human being should have been treated".

Her employers, Dr Truman Abassah and his wife Philomena, are back in Nigeria after they were deported half-way through five-year prison sentences imposed at Croydon Crown Court in 1991 for causing actual bodily harm. Ms Samuels, 30, lived with the Abassahs between 1985 and 1990 in Thamesmead, south-east London, and then in Bexleyheath.

Kathy Marks

Guerin murder suspect in court

A man held by police investigating the murder of journalist Veronica Guerin appeared in court in Dublin yesterday on drugs-related charges.

The man, in his late fifties, was arrested together with a woman when he left a ferry from Holyhead, Anglesey, at the Co Dublin port of Dun Laoghaire. All but two of six people detained for questioning in connection with the murder in recent days – including the woman – were released early yesterday. Ms Guerin, an investigative crime reporter, was shot dead at the wheel of her car in Dublin last June. Police have questioned almost 150 people about the killing, but so far only one man has been charged with her murder.

people



Sarah Napit. Found hanging in her room in Oxford (above) and in her room in Oxford (below).

Tragic end for the student who promised so much

An Oxford University student has been found hanging in her room in Oxford. Sarah Napit, 22, was discovered hanging in her room by housemates at 11pm on Thursday. Police, who were called to investigate, said they were not treating the death as suspicious.

Ms Napit, who came from Edinburgh, was in her third year studying history at Lady Margaret Hall and was due to sit her final examinations in two weeks' time. "She was an 'outstanding student' who had been immensely popular and always helpful," a university spokesman said. Ms Napit had been "experiencing difficulties" and had been in touch with the university's medical and counselling services. It is the second time in recent years that the college has been hit by tragedy. In October 1992, Tracey Cates, 18, was found hanging in her room at a week after arriving from her home in Essex.

The principal of The Mary Erskine School, in Edinburgh.

Bad boy made good is a lesson in class reform

Matthew Wilson is only 11, but already he can claim to be a reformed character.

The pupil whose disruptive behaviour prompted a strike by teachers at his Nottinghamshire junior school has become a classroom monitor after being moved to a new school, it emerged yesterday.

Yet once again Matthew (right), whose case divided teachers and governors at Manton Junior School in Worksop, is at the centre of controversy after a former governor accused the teaching union which led the strike of seeking publicity to boost recruitment.

Members of the National Association of Schoolmasters-Union of Women Teachers at Manton went on strike last autumn in protest at Matthew's behaviour, which they claimed was violent, disruptive and a threat to the safety of themselves and other pupils.

The crisis arose after governors at the school twice overturned the decision by the head teacher, Bill Skelley, to expel Matthew, who had reportedly threatened others with a baseball bat.

Moves to teach Matthew in isolation prompted other parents to withdraw their children.

The standoff ended only after the chair of governors resigned,



and Matthew's mother, Pamela Cliffe – still insisting his behaviour was no worse than other children's – agreed to transfer him to another school, St Augustine's. There, the head teacher Neil Moore yesterday described Matthew as "just another pupil" who caused no problems.

The NASUWT, however, was less serene after the former Manton governor Caroline Morrison alleged on BBC Radio's Today programme that the union had scapegoated the schoolboy to help attract more members.

Its general secretary, Nigel de Gruchy, denied the allegation, and insisted his union should take some of the credit for Matthew's improved performance. Lucy Ward

Best-seller award makes Mae the Queen of classical

The controversial teenage violinist Vanessa Mae is to receive an award as best-selling classical musician.

The millionaire prodigy, who blends her classical music with pop strains, will be presented with The World's Best-Selling Classical Recording Artist Of The Year prize at the World Music Awards in Monte Carlo, France next Thursday.

Previous winners of the award have included the tenors Luciano Pavarotti and Placido Domingo.

The 16-year-old will also give a rendition of her best-known single "Toccata And Fugue" at the ceremony.

Mae shot to fame when she appeared aged 14 in a video to accompany her techno-acoustic fusion music, dressed in a see-through outfit and walking in the sea.

But she has also produced solely classical albums, including the Beethoven and Tchaikovsky concertos which she recorded when she was 13.

Her album *The Violin Player* has sold more than three million copies worldwide.

Her latest LP, *The Classical Album* 1 she became the fastest selling solo classical artist ever.

briefing

HEALTH

Aids sufferers denies best treatment, claims doctor

People who are HIV positive are being denied a "powerful cocktail of drugs" used to attack the infection because of a lack of funding, according to a report published in the *New Scientist* today.

Ray Brettle, head of the infectious diseases unit at Edinburgh's City Hospital, said there was "no way" he could afford to give an array of drugs to patients attending his clinic.

The "triple therapy", consisting of dual levels of AZT and a layer of protease inhibitors which stops the virus before it has a chance to attack the immune system, is given to patients who have a low number of CD4 cells, a particular type of white blood cells.

Dr Brettle said this treatment would cost his clinic, the largest in the country, £3m a year, well over his £600,000 budget.

But researchers in France, who interviewed over 7,000 patients, claim that denying treatment because of the cost of medicine could be a false economy, as extra drugs keep people well and out of hospital.

Nicola Veash

LEISURE

Casinos hit run of bad luck

Casino attendance throughout Britain has dropped in nearly all areas over the past three years with the exception of London, the Midlands and Wales, according to figures from the Gaming Board.

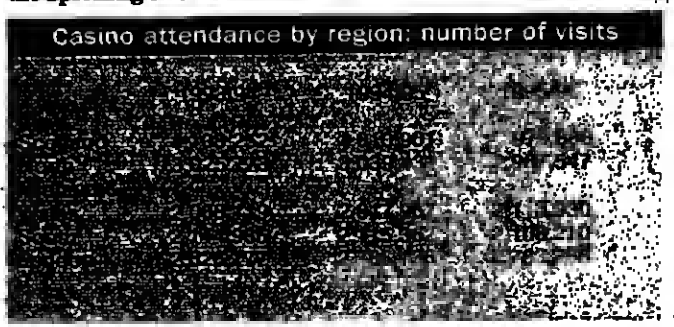
The figures show that while casino attendance has dropped in Scotland, the North, and the South albeit by very small amounts, it has increased in the Midlands and Wales and remained constant in London.

Casinos in Britain attract an average of around 2 million visits per year and will be hoping to cash in on changes to the laws governing them by attracting more customers. The changes include increasing the hours during which they can sell alcohol and the methods of payment they are allowed to accept.

Until last week casinos outside Scotland could only sell alcohol until midnight, but new legislation has relaxed the drinking hours to 3am in London and 2am elsewhere, in line with Scottish gaming clubs. From next week they can also accept debit cards as a form of payment as well as cash and cheques.

Both the Conservatives and Labour support deregulation for the industry, but it is unclear how long further changes will take with the upcoming election.

Colin Blackstock



EDUCATION

Class size row rekindled

The debate over class sizes and teaching standards was rekindled yesterday when figures revealed that despite one in five infants in London being taught in overcrowded classes, some are gaining better results than those in smaller groups by the time they turn 11.

Eleven of London's 33 boroughs have more than 31 pupils in each class, compared with just 27.5 per cent of infants nationally. But Kingston, where more than 70 per cent of children are taught in large classes, was the second best performing authority, according to primary league tables published last month.

Redbridge and Bromley, where more than half of pupils are taught in overcrowded classrooms, also scored highly in the London table of national tests for 11-year-olds. Nicola Veash

PRISONS

Liverpool tops inmate suicide list

Liverpool prison has the worst suicide record in the British jail system, with 19 inmates having taken their lives there since 1990.

Strangeways in Manchester and Brixton prison in London have the next worst tolls with 13 self-inflicted deaths at each jail in the same period.

The *Rising Toll of Prison Suicide*, a report by the Prison Reform Trust, links the "steady increase" in prison suicides to the growing problem of overcrowding.

The trust states that during the mid-1980s the annual number of suicides remained between 20 and 25. In the last three years it has been between 60 and 64. The prisoners most at risk are those under 25, those held on remand, mentally disordered prisoners and those beginning long sentences.

Ian Burrell

INDUSTRY

Corruption rife in Japanese firms

Corruption in Japanese corporations is widespread, according to a new survey. The report, compiled by the Corporate Auditors Association of Japan and covering 1,850 Japanese corporations, found that at least one-fifth of those surveyed had been involved in at least one scandal or improper business practices over the past 10 years.

Breaking the anti-monopoly law, and criminal cases including bribery and bid-rigging were among the most common offences. Less than 65 per cent of companies approached, including top listed companies and life insurers, answered the survey.

The report will sit awkwardly on the desk of the Japanese prime minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto, who has recently called for higher ethical standards in business.

Matthew Drace

Kleenex art that ended in tears

An Oxford professor, Sir Roger Penrose, who claims the makers of Kleenex quilted toilet paper used his designs, is seeking destruction of all stocks of the paper. He designed a special pattern for tiles in 1974 which gives a series of distinctive star shapes and owns the copyright for the pattern, according to a High Court writ.

Makers of Kleenex quilted toilet paper, Kimberly Clark Ltd, have made and sold the paper, which uses his pattern the writ says.

Sir Roger, Rouse Ball Professor of Mathematics at Oxford, is demanding the makers hand over all copies of his copyright pattern and an order for all articles or documents to be forfeited to him and his company, Pentaplex Ltd, or to be destroyed.

Pentaplex's director, David Bradley, said: "When it comes to the population of Great Britain being invited by a multi-national to wipe their bottoms on what appears to be a work of a knight of the realm without his permission, then a test stand must be made."

Sir Roger is also seeking an injunction to stop the makers infringing his copyright, an inquiry into damages for infringement of copyright, or an account of profits, and an order for payment of all sums found due, with interest, and costs. Kimberly Clark's associate company, Kimberly-Clark Corporation, took out two patents for toilet paper, which acknowledge that the overall appearance of two diagrams is the same as the Penrose pattern,

the writ claims. The pattern on the toilet tissue and on the packaging are reproductions of his copyright works, and Kimberly Clark knew the pattern was an infringing copy of his copyright works, the writ alleges.

Sir Roger and Pentaplex say they are not aware of all acts of infringement committed by Kimberly Clark, but will seek to recover for all acts. Unless Kimberly Clark is restrained by the High Court, it threatens and intends to continue infringing the copyrights, and Sir Roger and his company will suffer more loss and damage, the writ says.

The writ says that there is a particular demand for quilted toilet tissue, which involves building up the paper to give an impression and feel of greater softness and bulk.

Periodic patterns used for embossing suffer from the disadvantage that the toilet tissue "nests" on the roll, creating an unattractive appearance, and an aperiodic pattern, such as his, is particularly attractive, since nesting is avoided.

No date has been fixed for hearing the action. The professor, who was not available for comment today, was said to have first noticed the rolls after buying toilet paper in a supermarket.

A spokeswoman for Kimberly Clark said it had been approached last year when initial discussions were held. Nothing more had been heard until the writ was issued.

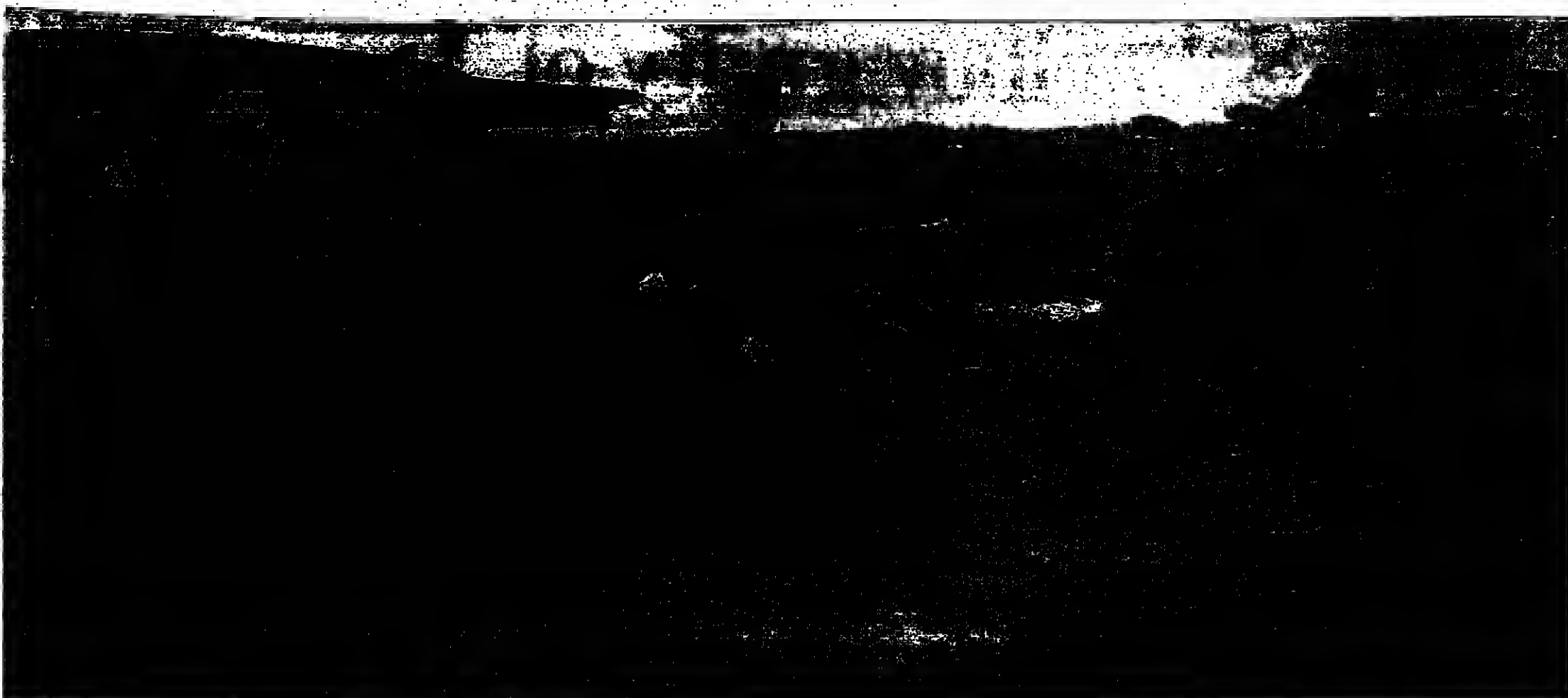
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Art is smart

Return to brush and palette in top prize shortlist

David Lister
Arts News Editor

Painting is back in fashion – celebrated once more by a new generation of artists turning away from the conceptualism and installation works that have dominated contemporary art.

Britain's richest art prize, the £26,000 NatWest Art Prize, which concentrates on painting and drawing by under-35s, has received a record 700 entries.

The 11-strong shortlist which will be announced next week will show that those emerging from art college today see that painting is an area for innovation and exploration. Last year's Turner Prize was won by an artist who showed a slow-motion video. But the volume of entries for the NatWest prize demonstrates the new thirst for painting.

Rosemary Harris, who chairs the judging panel and is a former curator of the modern collection at the Tate Gallery, said last night: "Video and sculpture have been very important recently, but it is marvellous to see that good painters are emerging in Britain."

"At the moment there are a lot of young artists looking at painting in a very interesting way. Innovation in the use of paint was one of the criteria for the prize ... and these young artists are very interested in the processes involved in painting."

One artist, Jason Martin, paints his abstract works on aluminium, a process Ms Harris found particularly "exciting". Another, Rosie Snell, painted a 9ft by 6ft canvas of a view of

the lighthouse at Orford Ness

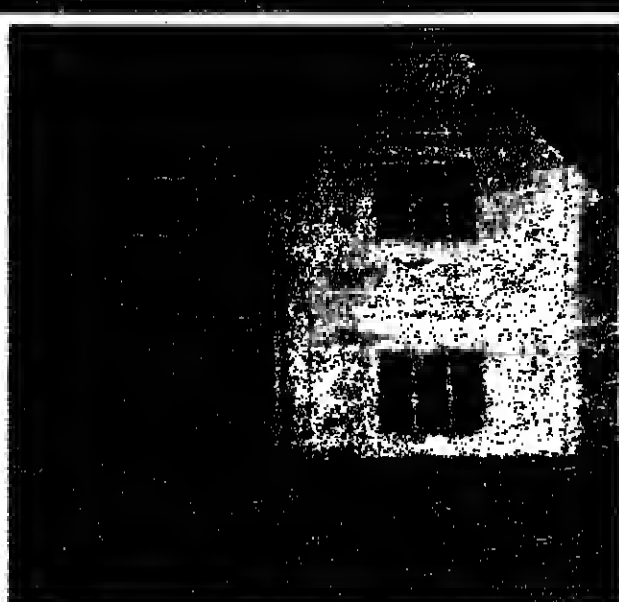
Ms Harris said of this entry: "Rather than coming from figuration to abstraction she seemed to be doing the other way round, looking at abstraction but being figurative, partly due to the scale and partly due to the way she used the paint. She was doing something rather interesting ... figuration from an abstract point of view."

Rosie Snell, who studied at Loughborough College of Art and Design, said yesterday: "At college I was one of the very few doing painting. Most were doing conceptual works, making things out of wax. I think painting is coming back, but slowly, particularly representational painting which has been out of favour for a long time."

She added: "Damien Hirst is very clever in the way he types himself so well. I'd like to think the new generation is not so interested in hyping itself."

The NatWest Art Prize aims to encourage innovation and technical skills in composition, drawing and use of colour. The winner will be announced in May, and the works of all the shortlisted artists will be displayed at the NatWest Group's new Lothbury Gallery, a converted banking hall in the City of London, this summer.

The full shortlist comprises: Judy Burton, 35; Stephen Chambers, 35; Melanie Comer, 26; Jane Dixon, 33; Mark Francis, 34; Jeff Gibbons, 34; Mark Hainwood, 29; Simon Lewis, 31; Jason Martin, 26; Max Mossop, 34; and Rosie Snell, 25.



Government's hidden treasures: Top, Herbert Amould Olivier's *Where Belgium Greeted Britain, December 4th 1914* (1915) and above, Spencer Gore's *Harold Gilman's House at Letchworth* (1912)



Lux Aeterna, by Rosie Snell, 25, one of the 11 shortlisted entries for this year's NatWest Art Prize

... but one treasure trove is still hidden

David Lister

The Government has revealed for the first time its full holding of 20th-century art masterpieces which adorn ministers' office walls and embassies around the world.

Artists including Lowry, Sickert, Stanley Spencer, Patrick Heron, Patrick Caulfield, Howard Hodgkin and Barbara Hepworth are among the dozens of well-known names that the Government has been buying to place at ministers' and ambassadors' disposal.

Yesterday, at a reception at 10 Downing Street, the Department of National Heritage

celebrated the publication of the first catalogue listing all the 20th-century pictures and sculptures the Government owns. The catalogue took 15 years to compile, and thousands more earlier works are still to be documented. It lists over 2,000 works by almost 1,000 artists, though it does not say in which embassy or ministry they reside.

But although members of the public are allowed access by law to individual works of art bought by the Government, the paintings will remain off limits to all but a few.

A DNH spokesman said yesterday: "I'm afraid you can't just ring up and say you would like to see a particular painting in 10 Downing Street. A member of the public would have to prove an academic interest in a particular artist to be allowed to see a painting in a government building."

Many in the art world have been unaware of the exact nature of the holdings. Dr Woody Baron, who retires this week as director of the collection, admitted: "It has been strange to see references to paintings as, for example, a Paul Nash saying 'whereabouts unknown' when I knew it was in the collection."

IN TOMORROW'S INDEPENDENT

Five sections for the very best in news, features, sport, business, travel, property, and money



TOBACCO WARS
Why cigarette companies are facing a fight to the death in the US courts

PLUS:
THE DANGERS OF COHABITATION
Can living together damage your marriage?

WHITER SHADE OF PALE
Why British black women are lightening their skin

NO HIDING PLACE
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SUNDAY PREVIEW
Full seven-day terrestrial and satellite TV listings

AND NEXT WEEK ...
First exclusive extracts from the new *The River Café Cook Book Two*

IT IS. ARE YOU?

A small speck in the sky; a giant find for insurance man

Charles Arthur
Science Editor

To Stephen Laurie, the tiny speck in the sky 100 million light years away meant big news. For the amateur astronomer realised, as he monitored his computer-controlled telescope, that he had discovered a supernova, or exploding star, in the constellation Draco.

When he did, just before midnight last Monday, he immediately sent an electronic message to the International Astronomical Union in Harvard which confirmed by the morning that he was the first in the world to spot it, beating the professionals and becoming only the second Briton ever to discover such an event.

Mr Laurie, 38, an actuary of Church Stretton, Shropshire, had spent just six weeks using the £3,500, 10in telescope on his patio, linked to a £2,000 device which contains photoelectric sensors capable of picking up

"I was lucky to find a supernova so quickly. It's a bit like winning the lottery"

light far fainter than the human eye can discern. That data was passed for processing to a computer inside, then to another computer, which compared the images with those taken earlier. And in one, there was a significantly brighter spot – the supernova.

"It's known as a 1A type – a double star system in which they

orbit each other, and the bigger star had accreted more mass from the smaller one." Then, the star reached a critical mass and exploded into light. Supernovae are rare and unpredictable: professional astronomers have been known to spend 20 years looking for them without success.

Mr Laurie, a keen astronomer since getting his first telescope at 12, had to hide his excitement in order not to disturb his wife, Angela, who was asleep. "I didn't wake her up, but told her the next morning," he said. "I was very lucky to find a supernova so quickly. It's a bit like winning the lottery."

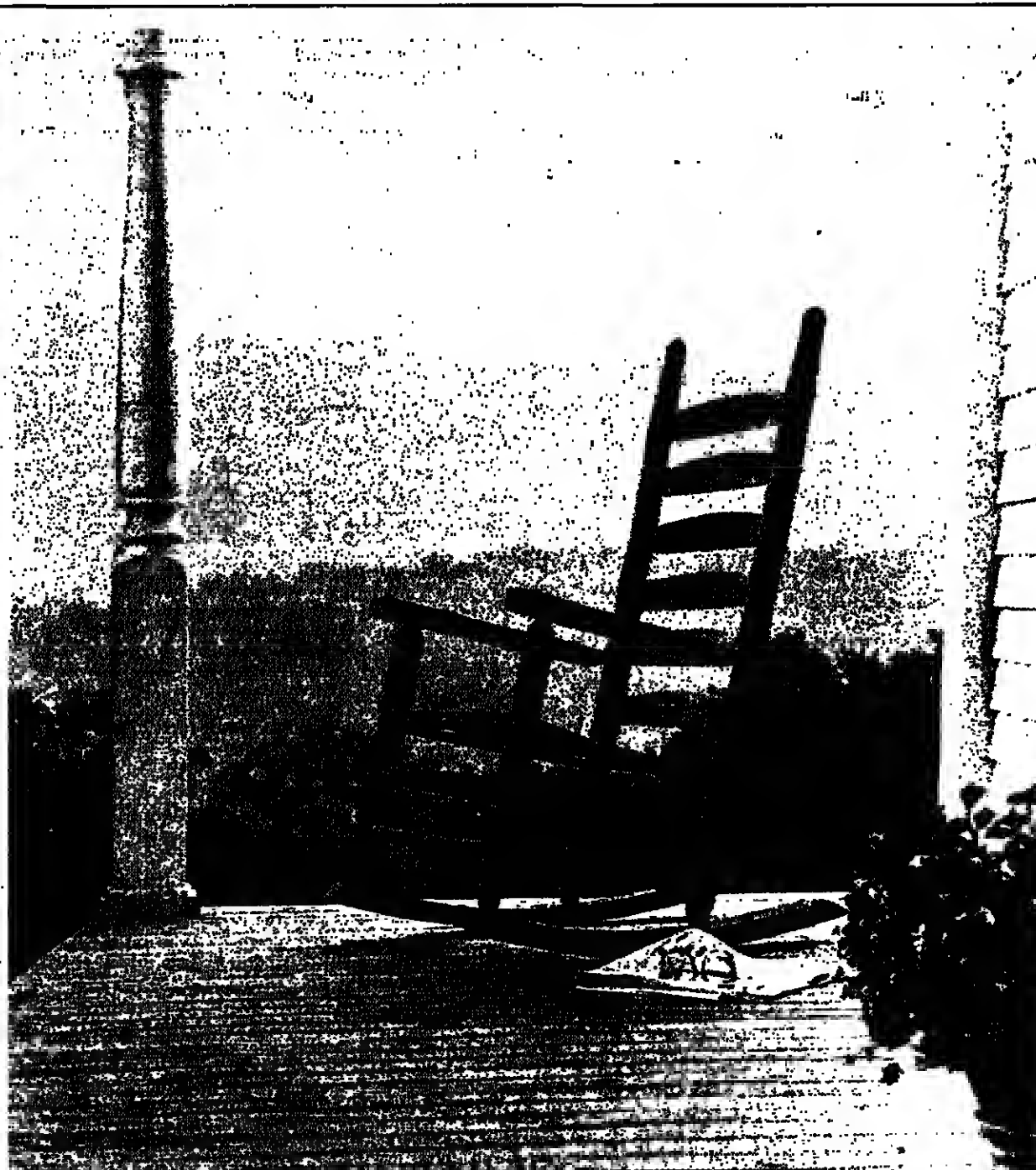
But his patience has paid off before: he has already discovered 50 asteroids.

He was inspired to hunt supernovae after fellow amateur Mark Armstrong became the first British astronomer – amateur or professional – to discover an exploding star last October.

He programmed his telescope to scour the heavens systematically, focusing on up to 60 galaxies an hour. The supernova stood out as a white dot in galaxy NGC 3147, which he realised was missing from an earlier image of the same galaxy. After waiting a few hours to see if it remained still (as a star should), he emailed the IAU, which monitors and approves such discoveries. Astronomers there analysed the star's light spectra and confirmed it as a supernova.

The next day, an official email circular from the IAU told astronomers around the world that Mr Laurie was the discoverer of SN1997BQ – for, unlike stars and comets, supernovae are not given names.

"It was great when the email arrived, because there was always the possibility that it was just a variable star or something," Mr Laurie said. "We will celebrate. I suspect we'll have a few glasses of wine this weekend."



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JACK DANIEL'S TENNESSEE WHISKEY

Amnesty International has repeatedly asked the Government to stop UK companies trading in electro-shock weapons used in torture. In 1995 a Channel 4 documentary exposed the extent of the trade. Despite a scandal in the media, nothing was done to stop the trade. A year later the same film-making team went back to find that in the electro-shock market, it was business as usual. Electro-shock weapons cause, among other things, severe pain, vomiting and involuntary release of the bladder and bowels. Help us ban this sick trade.

**To Messrs
Major, Blair and
Ashdown.
If you win,
will you stop
British firms
trading in
torture?
Yes or No?**

The Saudi prison was like an oven, but Muhammad did not care about the heat. He feared the cool evening. Evening brought boots in the corridor and his cell door opening.

Every evening the nightmare began again. Batons thudded into him. A high-pitched buzz heralded a jolting agony. The pain of 100,000 volts forcing themselves through flesh was indescribable. His body leapt in panic, tried to turn itself inside out to escape the torment. Vomit, hot and violent, flooded Muhammad's nose and mouth as his stomach fought to heave the pain out of him. But like his cries and pleas for mercy, the pain never stopped. It went on and on until he had lost all control of his body, his bowels, his water. As dawn brought the return of heat he would wake, aching and dumbly terrified, in his own vomit and urine where they'd left him, thinking, 'Yes, that is how they want you to be during a torture'.

The state of the torturer's art.

Electro-shock torture, like that inflicted on Muhammad in Saudi Arabia, is used on prisoners in at least 50 countries. To fire an electro-shock gun you push it against the victim and press the trigger. A charge of up to 300,000 volts discharges into their body. The effect varies from person to person but there is always severe pain. The victim immediately loses control of his muscles. He may convulse or faint, release his bowels and bladder. We say 'he', but electro-shock weapons are often used against women and experienced torturers concentrate on the most sensitive parts of the body - the lips, inside the mouth, ears, on the soles of the feet and genitals, inside vagina and rectum.

Torturers like these weapons because, despite inflicting crushing physical and psychological pain longer term effects include black depressions, impotence, hair loss and post-traumatic stress disorder they leave little outward trace.

"We'll get complaints from Amnesty."

A 50 year old university professor - whom we will call 'Roberto' - was arrested in Zaire.

The police into whose clutches he came were amateurs. They began giving him a savage beating. An officer stopped them, explaining that what they were doing "will leave scars and we will get complaints from Amnesty".

The officer ordered them to use electro-shock batons instead.

Over the next four weeks, the policemen enthusiastically practised the art of electro-shock torture on their new guinea pig. One

of the lessons they learned was that when they fired the weapon against his neck or genitals, Roberto vomited, lost control of his bowels and blacked out. They must have enjoyed this, for they did it over and over again.

The Channel 4 'Dispatches' scandal.

Since 1990, Amnesty International has identified more than 100 companies which have offered electro-shock weapons for sale. These weapons are illegal in Britain. It is an offence to possess them, much less to sell or manufacture them, but in 1995, Channel 4's *Dispatches* programme showed secretly shot film of a representative of Royal Ordnance, part of British Aerospace, eagerly bidding to supply large quantities of electro-shock batons to a supposed Middle Eastern customer. The exposé caused a stink but, ironically, the only person threatened with arrest by police was Channel 4's reporter Martyn Gregory himself. A year later, *Dispatches* demonstrated that it was business as usual in the electroshock trade. British firms simply brokered deals through third countries, an order being shipped, say, from a factory in Mexico directly to a client in Africa. Since the weapons never touched British soil, the deals were not technically illegal. No-one seems to be in a hurry to close this loophole.

The law is lagged.

There is a fug in current laws which encourages companies to be, to quote the celebrated phrase of an ex-Minister, 'economical with the actualite' about dubious exports. Cargos can be disguised by all sorts of euphemisms. A 300,000 volt stun-gun becomes 'a voltage meter'. Governments bend their own rules. The US Government did not ask American firms to obtain export licences for electro-shock batons sent to NATO allies Greece or Turkey, despite evidence that both use these weapons for torture.

Mediha Curabaz, a nurse, fell foul of Turkey's brutal police by refusing to sign a false statement. They gave her electric-shocks to her fingers, nipples and vagina. Mediha said, "they thrust the electric truncheon violently into my sexual organs and I felt a pain as if I was being drilled there with an electric drill. I started bleeding and fainted."

A challenge to the political leaders.

Amnesty International wants governments to stop the export of electro-shock weapons to countries known routinely to torture. We want laws to plug the loopholes. More than a year after the Scott Report called for a fundamental review of controls on UK arms exports, this Government has failed to act. Will the Government elected on May 1st be any different?

Amnesty International asks John Major, Tony Blair and Paddy Ashdown to answer, clearly and unambiguously, the question: "If your party wins will you take the necessary effective action to stop British companies seeking to profit by selling electro-shock weapons to countries which torture? Yes or no?"

Don't wait till May 1st, cast your vote now.

Roberto said after his electro-shock torture, 'This type of weapon is really immoral, because the people who make it for torture don't test it on their own bodies and don't know the pain it causes. They make other people suffer simply to make money. It is very sad.'

If you agree with Roberto that it is immoral to profit from selling weapons used to torture people, please help us ram this home to the politicians.

Whichever way you vote on May 1st, you can register your determination to stop the electro-shock trade - and demonstrate your commitment to basic human rights - by filling in the coupon here and now and joining us or making a donation.

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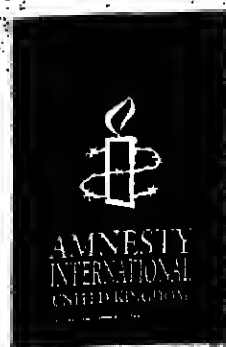
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news

Marathon runs into wall of security scares

Ian Burrell

Pity the organisers of tomorrow's Flora London Marathon. Not only is there a danger of terrorist attack, but the race is under threat from the water, the air and the sky.

While Scotland Yard is co-ordinating a major security operation to limit the chances of a bomb attack, marathon officials believe the elements pose a greater risk.

Race organisers urged the public to be vigilant, but said they were more fearful that the event would be disrupted by British Gas or Thames Water, than the IRA.

Contingency plans have been drawn up to guard against the possibility of collapsed roads, burst gas mains and flooding.

Yesterday the Cancer Research Campaign created a further scare when it announced that runners were at risk from skin cancer if they failed to protect themselves against the spring sunshine.

Nevertheless more than 500,000 people are expected to turn out to watch a field of 28,000 runners.

The bomb threats which led to the postponement of last weekend's Grand National have

heightened fears that the marathon could be the next event on the terrorist hit list.

When the National was finally run on Monday, racegoers were told not to bring baggage to the Aintree course and were searched at the turnstiles. Such thorough checking would not be possible at the marathon.

With more than 26 miles of public highway to monitor, the race is the most difficult major sporting event to protect from such attack.

Nick Bittel, the marathon's chief executive, said that during its 17-year history the race had learned to live with the threat of terrorism.

He said: "Some years ago, two days before the marathon, there was a bomb at the Baltic Exchange which is virtually on our route. More recently, the first vehicle to go down Marsh Wall after the bombing there was ours, putting down the blue line for the marathon."

"But it is not just a terrorist threat that could take out one of our roads. Water mains go down all the time and if a hole appears in a road you have a major problem." Three years ago a burst gas main at a key point on the course led to

major difficulties.

This year race organisers are concerned about the commercial threat of "ambush advertising". Companies which are not sponsoring the race have sought to cash in on its popularity by placing prominent advertisements along the route. There are fears that the practice, which is legal in Britain, could lead to loss of sponsors at future marathons and other sporting events in this country.

Even the glorious weather was yesterday denounced as a threat to runners and spectators. Professor Gordon McVie, director general of the Cancer Research Campaign, said: "Skin cancer is the fastest growing cancer in the UK and because it's only April, many people wrongly believe they are not at risk from the sun."

"Marathon runners and spectators are particularly vulnerable because many of them will be out for most of the day and they won't be covered up."

The charity, which is being sponsored by 387 runners in this year's event, said that, where possible, people should seek natural shade, wear cover-up clothing, avoid the midday sun, and use a sunscreen with a protection factor of 15 or above.



Team effort: Auctioneer Charles Lanning sorting some of the 14,000 football programmes, some dating from 1894, that went under the hammer in Honiton, Devon, in a sale expected to make £50,000. Photograph: Tim Cuff

Fever pitch over pages of history

Kathy Marks

They ranged from sports fans to collectors and dealers, united by a common passion: football. Nearly 200 people crammed into Bonhams' West Country branch yesterday in the hope of taking home a slice of football history.

Under the hammer was the largest single collection of football-match programmes yet auctioned, 14,000 of them, spanning more than a century. Soccer enthusiasts travelled to the sale in Honiton, Devon, from all over the country, and from abroad.

The collection included the programme from the first FA Cup Final played at Wembley, the 1923 match in which Bolton beat West Ham 2-0. The rarest of the 572 lots on sale was the single-sheet programme from England's 8-1 win over Ireland in 1884, which was expected to raise up to £1,000.

The collection was accumulated by a fan who began hoarding them in 1947. It grew so large that he kept the programmes in cardboard boxes in rooms all over his house, including the attic and the garage.

He collected programmes from every Cup Final from 1920 to 1982, as well as 900 from matches between the wars. The pre-war Cup Final programmes are regarded as the penny blacks of football memorabilia.

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• PIN number security.
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Dixons

There's a great deal going on

Mercury poisoning victims win £1.3m in landmark case

Ian Burrell

A British multinational chemical company has agreed to pay £1.3m in compensation to 20 South African workers who were poisoned by mercury.

Four of the black workers have died and a number of the others are suffering severe brain and other neurological damage.

The workers had accused Thor Chemicals Holdings, of Margate, in Kent, of adopting working practices in South Africa which would not have been allowed in Britain.

Yesterday's landmark settlement, which followed the filing of claims for damages in the High Court in London, has major implications for British businesses with operations in developing countries.

The settlement was announced after a report in *The Independent* last month highlighted the case. Similar claims are being pursued against other British companies owning uranium mines and asbestos plants in southern Africa.

One of the Thor workers, Albert Dlamini, 30, received £100,000 for injuries which have left him walking on crutches and unable to speak properly. He said: "Working for Thor has destroyed my life. I feel very bitter that this British company has come to my country and adopted working practices that would never have been accepted in its own country."

The workers first realised something was seriously wrong when three men were taken into



South African employees Gideon Nkomo (left) and Patrick Heng-gawa who gave evidence against UK firm Thor chemicals

hospital in 1992, suffering from severe mercury poisoning.

Peter Cele, 21, died seven months later. Englebert Ngobo, 55, was in hospital for three years before he slipped into a coma and died.

They had all worked at Thor's mercury plant at Cato Ridge in Natal. The operation had been set up by the English parent company using technology and systems of operation which had been developed in Britain.

Thor had operated a mercury plant at Margate which, during the 1980s, was repeatedly criticised by the Health and Safety Executive for bad working practices and the over-exposure of British workers to mercury.

Under pressure from the HSE, Thor closed down its mercury operations in Britain in 1987 and expanded them in South Africa, where the plant relied on Zulu-speaking casual,

untrained and unskilled labour.

In bringing their claim, which was also made against the Thor chairman Desmond Cowley, the workers enlisted the support of experts in occupational medicine and toxicology.

In their evidence, the workers testified that rather than trying to reduce mercury levels in the environment, the company adopted a policy of trying to control mercury exposure by replacing workers who had high levels of mercury with new casual employees. Others, they said, were sent to work in the garden until their mercury levels dropped.

Thor had fought to prevent the workers' claims being heard in a British court, even appealing to the House of Lords. But the case had been set for a three-month trial in October.

No one at Thor was available for comment yesterday.

007 under fire for his anti-gun stance

Colin Blackstock

An anti-handgun advertising campaign came under attack yesterday from gun lobby enthusiasts who launched a pre-emptive strike by sending more than 50 letters of complaint to the Advertising Standards Authority before the commercials were screened.

The 40-second advertisement, which was only shown in cinemas for the first time yesterday, features the voice of the former James Bond actor Sean Connery.

It was unveiled last month and is designed to win support for an extension to the Government ban on handguns to include .22 pistols.

The campaign is being run by the Snowdrop Petition which was set up after Thomas Hamilton gunned down 16 children and their teacher at a primary school in Dunblane in March 1996.

The advert shows a man loading a .22-calibre handgun and firing at a human shaped target which is devastated by the shots.

The London ad agency which produced the advertisement and is distributing it free of charge has hit back at critical pro-shooting campaigners.

Barry Delaney of Delaney Fletcher Rozell said: "The gun lobby started having a go at this before they had even seen it."

He rejected the claim by Phil Thomson of *Shooting Times* that a .22 handgun could not pose a threat or kill people.

"It is a very feeble argument and an example of their desperation," he said.

Mr Thomson said that a ban on .22 handguns was no guarantee against another tragedy such as Dunblane.

He said: "If a complete ban on guns would guarantee that this (Dunblane) would never happen again, you wouldn't

find a gun owner in the country who would object. But in reality it would not work."

Gun enthusiasts are slating the commercial as a misrepresentation of the truth, and are even more incensed by the fact that Connery is involved, claiming he made his name playing the gun-toting James Bond.

However, Ann Pearson of Snowdrop, defended the former Bond star, saying he had made the James Bond films 25 years ago.

"He is a voice in Hollywood as is Dustin Hoffman who has spoken out against violence in films," said Mrs Pearson.

"That is good because we are not going to be able to do that and be heard."

A spokesman for the Advertising Standards Authority said no action would be taken over the advert until it had received complaints from people who had actually seen it.

50,000 at risk colleges

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250,000 places at risk from college cuts

Lucy Ward
Education Correspondent

Up to 250,000 students will be denied places at sixth-form and further-education colleges next year as budgets are slashed by £115m. Details of grants for the next academic year show the first year-on-year cut in government funding for further education for over a decade.

The cutbacks will come as a severe blow to the further-education sector, which has met tough government-imposed targets and expanded student numbers by over 15 per cent since 1993 while slashing costs. Among the victims will be A-level students, whose course hours will be cut, and the unemployed, who will not be able to afford tuition fees colleges could be forced to impose.

The cuts represent a reduction of 125,000 part-time student places (or fewer full-time places) compared with this year. Colleges will also have to abandon plans for an expansion equivalent to 125,000 more part-time places in 1997-8. Almost nine out of ten colleges face a funding cut in September, some of more than a tenth of their budget, according

to the Further Education Funding Council, the quango which funds colleges. Further-education leaders yesterday predicted the cuts would prove disastrous for colleges, with those worst-hit facing merger or even closure.

Sixth-form colleges, some of which produce league-table-topping A-level results, are among the chief victims of the cuts, with specialist colleges teaching art and design and agriculture also badly affected.

John Brennan, further-education development director at the Association of Colleges, said they were being driven near breaking-point. To absorb the cuts, principals faced having to make large-scale redundancies, and some would be forced to close down costly courses such as engineering or construction altogether.

He added: "Colleges will also have to drive down costs by reducing class-contact time, especially for full-time students, and expanding class sizes. Students who possibly need more support than most will not get the same learning inputs that they have in the past and that they would probably still get in schools."

Colleges are angry that, after being repeatedly told they play a central role in boosting the skills of Britain's workforce, budget cuts are now preventing them meeting the demand for training they have generated. Earlier this year ministers announced that a pot of money available to further-education colleges to fund expansion was to be removed in 1997-8 because demand for the cash was too high.

Bilton Community College, one of Britain's largest colleges, will have to axe 30,000 planned student places because of the cuts.

Chief executive Keith Wymers said: "There is a huge and unmet need for education, training and retraining in the Black Country and beyond. This wholly inadequate allocation may mean that thousands of students will not be able to train and retrain."

Reputations in the balance at jugglers' get together



Jugglers practising yesterday for the 10th British Juggling Convention, which opened at Nottingham University on Thursday and will run until Sunday. Around 1,500 jugglers, unicyclists, stiltwalkers and circus acts are expected to attend the event. Photograph: Doug Marks

Siamese girl twins 'healthy'

Siamese twins have been born at a hospital in Manchester, it emerged yesterday. The girls, who are joined at the abdomen, were born at St Mary's hospital earlier this week.

It is the second successful delivery of conjoined twins at the hospital in two years. The girls were delivered by Caesarean section and are doing well, medical chiefs said.

It is not yet known whether surgeons will carry out an operation to separate the girls.

In September 1995, Chloe and Nicole Astbury were born at St Mary's - the first Siamese twins in Britain for 10 years. They were joined from the breastbone to the navel and shared a liver but died just over a month later.

About 60 per cent of Siamese twins, which occur about once in 100,000 births, are stillborn. The mother was under the care of St Mary's hospital's top team of consultants, which was involved in delivering the Astbury twins in 1995.

Dr Mike Marech, 47, clinical director of obstetrics. He has been involved in delivering all 10 sets of Siamese twins born at St Mary's in the last decade.

Dr Marech was assisted by consultant paediatric surgeon Alan Dickson. Both consultants continued to keep a close watch on the mother and would be monitoring the twins' progress in the weeks to come, a hospital spokesman said.

The twins' parents, who have not been named, come from south Manchester and are believed to have no other children. The days-old baby girls are said to share a liver.

A spokesman for Central Manchester Healthcare Trust said the family had requested that they be allowed privacy and did not want interviews. A spokesman said the twins both had all limbs intact. The babies were not on ventilators and were generally "doing well".

Dr Marech said that the twins had a "good chance" of survival. "They're very healthy."

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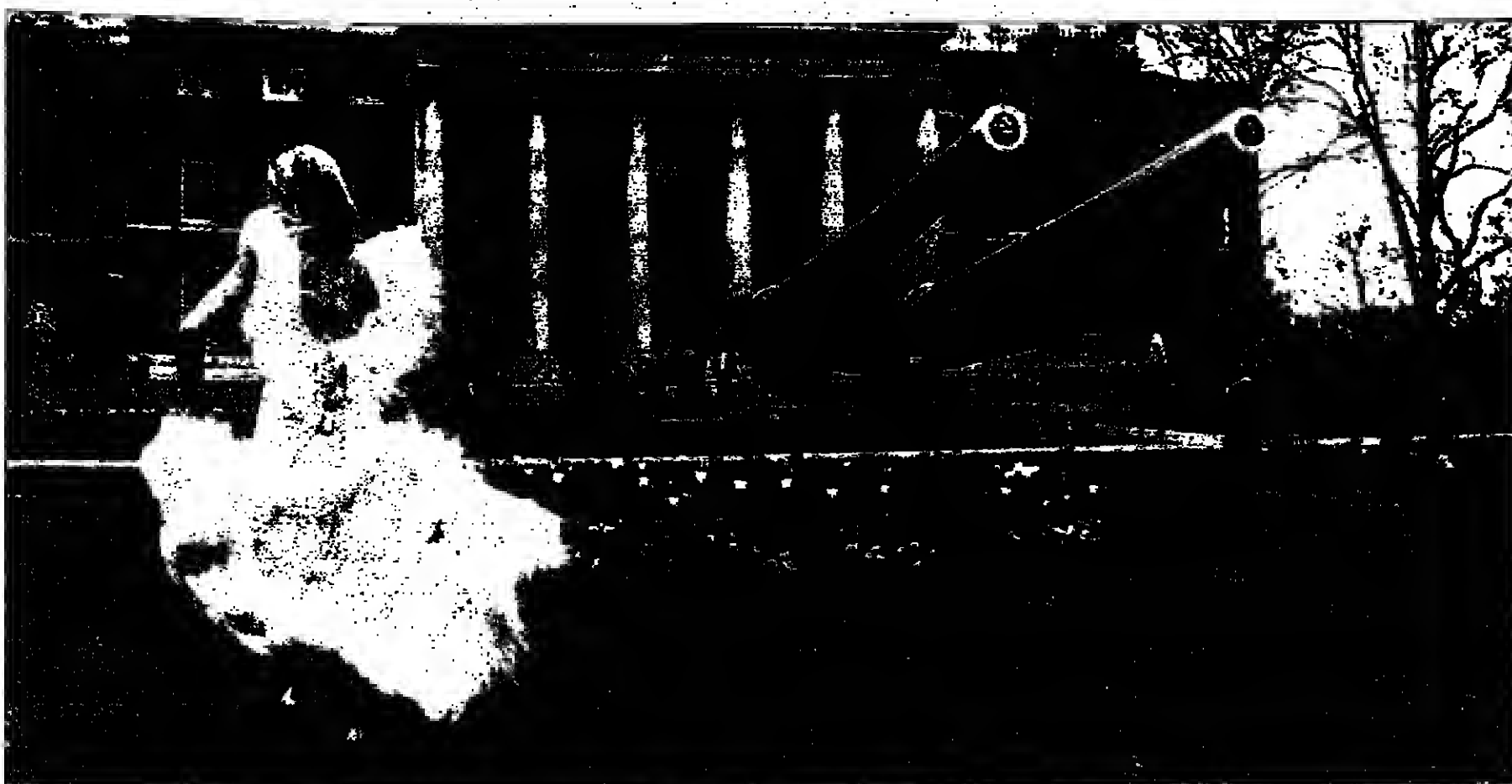
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Back in time: Zoe O'Shaughnessy modelling an exact copy of the white feather dress worn by Ginger Rogers in the 1940s film *Top Hat*

Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

Ginger classic as Roaring Forties fashion breezes in

Louise Jury

When Ginger Rogers donned her white feather dress in *Top Hat*, one of the 10 films she made with Fred Astaire, the result was a classic of cinema history.

The stunning outfit has been recreated by fashion students at the University of East London for a series of shows at the Imperial War Museum to complement its current Forties Fashion exhibition.

Show organiser Angela Godwin said: "One of the most important influences on fashion in the Thirties and Forties was Hollywood. The original costumes have long since gone so we asked the students to make facsimile costumes. The white dress Ginger Rogers wore in *Top Hat* caused quite a lot of problems because the feathers got up Fred Astaire's nose."

Other dresses which have been copied for the fashion shows - which will take place on 16, 17 and

18 April - include the green velvet curtain dress worn by Vivien Leigh in *Gone With The Wind*, a gold sequin number worn by Joan Crawford in *The Women* and a pale blue crinoline seen on Rita Hayworth in *Cover Girl*. Slightly more risqué is a black satin, bare midriff dress as originally sported by Lauren Bacall in *To Have and Have Not*.

"There was a whole glamour side to fashion at a time when things weren't particularly glamorous," Ms Godwin said. "This is one of the most unusual eras of fashion from the absolutely luxurious to the totally practical."

Some of the more practical clothes are also demonstrated in the catwalk show of 150 costumes which could not be displayed in the main exhibition because of lack of space. They include a cape made from a blanket and men's pyjamas from a parachute.

The shows will be accompanied by the music of the era.

Ministers in Ireland besieged by pro-life militants

Alan Murdoch
Dublin

Regular weekend picketing of Irish cabinet ministers' constituency homes by anti-abortion groups has put them and their families under siege in an increasingly confrontational turn in the "pro-life" campaign.

The latest target is the Health Minister, Michael Noonan, whom pro-lifers accuse of being insufficiently anti-abortion. His Limerick home has been picketed for several months, though he has not made it a public issue. An unlikely target to many, the blunt-speaking ex-schoolteacher and former justice minister is hardly the most liberal member of the centre-right Fine Gael party led by Taoiseach John Bruton. Mr Noonan has been singled out in

demands for a new referendum to outlaw all terminations.

Irish politicians face vociferous pressure to state their anti-abortion credentials. In north Dublin, Fine Gael Justice Minister Nora Owen recently received the same treatment. Mr Noonan's predecessor, Brendan Howlin, Labour MP for Wexford, was similarly targeted with demonstrations outside his mother's home.

The law on abortion has been in confusion since the 1992 "X" case, involving a suicidal 14-year-old initially barred by a High Court injunction from going to Britain for an abortion. It was lifted by the Supreme Court after an international furor.

In the aftermath, which saw US funds and personnel arriving to help the pro-life cause, the then Fianna-Faill-Labour government of Albert Reynolds held referendums which upheld a woman's right to abortion information and to travel abroad for a termination. Liberals and conservative voters combined to defeat a parallel but unclear proposal that would have allowed abortion when the life of the mother (as opposed to her health) was at risk, a formulation based on the Supreme Court's view in the "X" case.

Anti-abortion campaigners have been pressing ever since for a new vote. This month, amid a dispute over unproven claims that an abortion took place in a Dublin in 1995, they seized on a poll indicating 65 per cent of voters thought the issue should be resolved by another referendum. The survey did not seek to determine the balance for or against liberalising the law, and just 26 per cent in favour of the Dail settling the issue suggested both sides were unhappy with the current legal mess. Family-planning groups maintain Irish women in any case prefer the confidentiality of an abortion in Britain to risk of discovery at home, a choice reinforced by the fixing of the right to travel into the constitution in 1992.

Pro-life campaigners this week held a rally in Dublin, where they were encouraged to increase pressure for the third anti-abortion referendum since 1983. The Pro-Life Campaign chairman, former Senator Des Hanahan, unveiled a petition paper "A New Amendment - The People's Right," calling for an additional clause in the constitution reading "No law shall be enacted, and no provision of this Constitution shall be interpreted, to render induced abortion lawful in the State."

A Labour source said the defeat of anti-divorce groups in the 1995 referendum has led right-wing Catholics to return to the battle, with a general election imminent. "During canvassing about one in every 15 or 20 doors will be slammed in your face because you are a member of the Labour Party and we are perceived to be liberal."

UK party's hard line on abortion

In Britain the ProLife Alliance was set up in November to campaign on a range of moral issues, most notably abolition of abortion. It has found 56 candidates to stand in constituencies where the sitting MP was not a committed anti-abortionist.

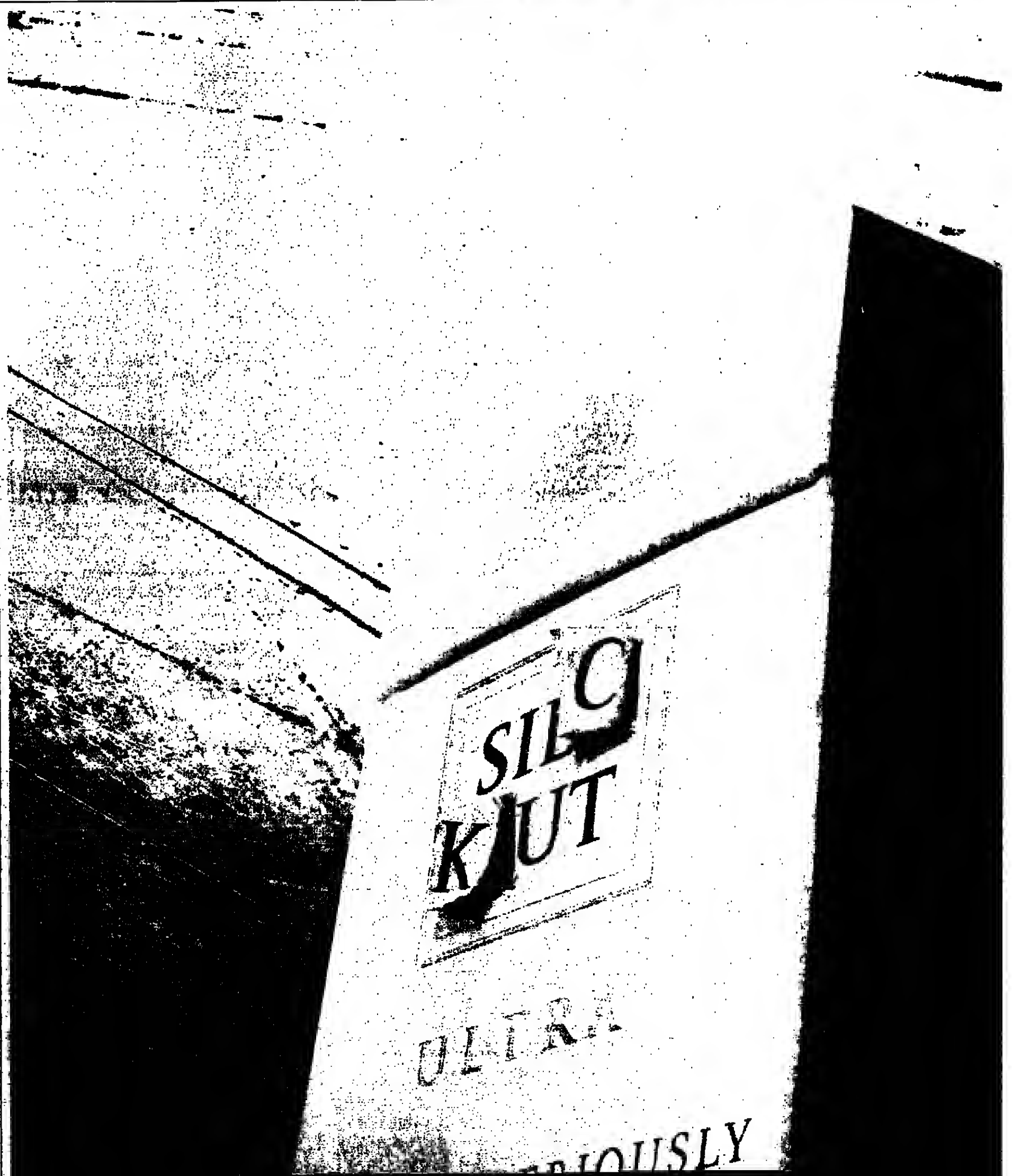


Founder: Bruno Quintavalle

The party was founded by Bruno Quintavalle and his mother, Countess Josephine Quintavalle. Despite being known for their anti-abortion stance, except where it would harm the mother's body, they deny the ProLife Alliance is single-issue. They are committed to repeal of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990, which permitted development of test-tube-baby research, and the outlawing of assisted-conception techniques where more embryos were created than were immediately returned to the mother's body.

They say "the pro-life cause is the supreme cause", which is why they do not tackle issues favoured by traditional parties such as transport and the economy. They recently suffered a blow when Mohamed Al Fayed withdrew promised funding.

Sam Coates



PROTECT CHILDREN: DON'T MAKE THEM BREATHE YOUR SMOKE

Chief Medical Officers' Warning

1 mg Tar 0.1 mg Nicotine

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Over-confidence doesn't mean you don't work. It means you don't take risks. As more and more people support you, your success seems inevitable. Your constituency becomes your guards, and you are left with nothing to say. Plenty of support, plenty of money, but no message. That's how front-runners fail. Nobody told the voters the election is over already, so they go to the polls and vote for the candidates who have something to say. From Behind the Oval Office, by Dick Morris, Random House

THE INDEPENDENT

election '97

Paisley pact aims to beat off Sinn Fein



David McKitterick
Ireland correspondent

The Rev Ian Paisley yesterday took the bull by the horns and withdrew two of his general election candidates, taking some of the heat out of a recent bout of intensive inter-Unionist rivalry.

In a surprise unilateral initiative, he announced that he was pulling Democratic Unionist Party contenders out of the West Tyrone and North Belfast constituencies.

DUP candidates stand down in two seats to give a clear run to the Unionists

The move means North Belfast remains a safe Unionist seat while in West Tyrone the chances of a Sinn Fein victory are reduced.

Mr Paisley declared that in making the move he was putting Ulster before the "DUP" by attempting to maximise Unionist votes.

He called on David Trimble's Ulster Unionists to respond by allowing his party a clear

run in two other constituencies. The development means that in North Belfast the sitting Ulster Unionist MP, Cecil Walker, can be confident of re-election.

In West Tyrone, a new seat created by boundary revisions, it means Ulster Unionist candidate William Thompson is now in with a chance.

The constituency has a nationalist majority, but with Sinn

Fein and the Social Democratic and Labour Party both in the field, and Mr Thompson as the single Unionist candidate, the result could be close.

In elections to the Northern Ireland forum last year, the SDLP and Sinn Fein each took 28 per cent of the vote, the Ulster Unionists took 18 per cent and Mr Paisley's party 16 per cent. This means that if Unionist voters rally around Mr

Thompson he could take the seat. It was the DUP's strong showing in the forum election which encouraged the party to stake claims in seats such as West Tyrone - but the facts of political life have in effect dictated that the Unionist electorate would not countenance a split vote.

Mr Paisley and Mr Trimble have held a series of meetings aimed at finding an agreed

share-out of seats but these were not successful. Some observers now believe that in this stand-off Mr Paisley blinked first. The main remaining bone of contention is now East Belfast, which is held by Mr Paisley's deputy, Peter Robinson.

Here the Ulster Unionists have said they will run Reg Empey, a well-known former lord mayor of Belfast.

Although there is no appreciable nationalist presence in the constituency there could be a three-way split involving Mr Robinson, Mr Empey and a middle of the road Alliance candidate.

This prospect has galvanised Mr Robinson into issuing a flood of electoral faxes.

The latest of these yesterday berated "Vote-splitter Empey", with Mr Robinson declaring: "There is only one Unionist who can win East Belfast and every voter in East Belfast knows it is Peter Robinson."

Serious betting money on Blair

Kim Sengupta

As the election campaign sweeps past the halfway post, the smart money appears to be on Tony Blair centering past the winning post.

Bookmakers report that betting on Conservatives showed an upsurge after last Thursday's Mori poll showed them gaining six points while Labour fell by the same amount. But "serious money wagers" are still on heavily for Labour.

This view is backed by broadcaster and pundit of the turf, John McCrick, who has abandoned his lifelong Conservative allegiance to become a fervent New Labour backer. Having a punt on the Opposition makes both financial and political sense for Mr McCrick. He said: "You would have to be an absolute mug to bet on John Major winning. He is clapped out, finished, and so is his party. If this was a race Major would get lost on the way to the start. You might as well take a wad of dosh and flush it straight down the toilet."

"I have never voted Labour in my life, but I am going to now. I like Blair, and I believe he will do a good job. I am in fact a right wing Tory, but I have absolutely no time for this particular Government. They have absolutely no ideas apart from a different type of sleaze every day. It would be unhealthy for democracy if they get in."

Mr McCrick is not the only noteworthy backer for Mr Blair. Es-



Shouting the odds: Racing expert John McCrick outside the Houses of Parliament yesterday. "You would be a mug to bet on John Major," he is clapped out and so is his party." Photograph: Michael Kurtz

sex woman is wagering on him going to Downing Street as well.

This is not a psephological abstraction. The woman from Ilford, Essex, has put the biggest single bet of the election so far, £95,000 on Labour winning the election and Glasgow Rangers lifting the Scottish

Premier League.

Other rather unusual bets with William Hill include that of a Sheffield man, a first time bettor who placed exactly £11,467.89 on a Labour win. The middle aged man got odds of 1/6.

Another punter has staked £400

on Referendum Party getting at least one seat, at odds of 12/1, while the party's candidate in Westworth, South Yorks, has been the subject of a £150 bet.

Overall the bookmakers report a steady growth in the volume of betting. By May 1, the industry total is

expected to stand at around £10m. David Brown, who heads the political betting department at William Hill, said: "Up until Thursday's Mori poll the betting had been approximately 75 per cent for Labour and 25 for the Tories. At the moment it is running at 50-

50 each. But now that Labour is back in the lead again in the subsequent polls we expect the situation to change again."

"Sleaze on the agenda, and that wonderful confrontation between Martin Bell and Christina Hamilton has added to the soap

opera element, and this has brought in the punters."

Yesterday William Hill were offering 1/6 Labour, 7/2 Conservatives, and 250/1 Liberal Democrats. Ladbrokes had cut their odds on a Tory victory to 7/2 from 4/1, after an increase in betting for Tories.

A factory of the future shows the way with pay

Steve Boggan

Tony Blair paid a visit yesterday to what he believes is the business of the future - a factory where workers are paid less than the Low Pay Unit recommended minimum and where unions are almost non-existent.

The visit, to Landis & Gyr Communications in Croydon, south London, came in recognition of the fact that the company had voluntarily laid down its own minimum wage - £4 an hour - without union involvement.

But that is 42p an hour less than the Low Pay Unit recommends, 26p less than the favoured Union rate and lower - by an unspecified amount - than what the Transport & General Workers Union and the

GMB general union would like to see. For the past two years, the GMB has been running a campaign entitled "More Than £4".

Asked by *The Independent* whether he could live on such a wage - £152 a week before tax - Martin Brennan, managing director of the company which made £4m last year, replied: "I would find that difficult. I am concerned for my workforce but if I pay too much, I am out of business, so which do you want?"

Mr Blair toured the factory where smart cards and payphones are manufactured for BT, and he posed for photographs with Selvadurai Selvadurai, 48, who tests the phones.

Asked whether this was a business of the future, Mr Blair said: "Sure. It is investing in its

employees and treats them fairly. It is successful and is exporting to world markets in a way that is applying new technology to an educated workforce." Asked whether he thought £4 was fair, he said it was a matter for management and the workforce to negotiate.

Mr Brennan said he would accept union collective bargaining if more than half of his 200-strong workforce wanted it - only six are in unions - but Mrs Selvadurai said staff were so happy they did not need it.

Bhadi Patel of the Low Pay Unit felt £4 an hour was too low, but added: "We see a lot worse - in some cases £1.79 an hour". She said only 8.2 per cent of Croydon workers earned less than £4.42 an hour.

significant shorts

Labour's white suits turn off black voters

The missing black voter was highlighted by a leading black commentator who said many blacks were turned off the main parties through a lack of vision. Dariusz Howe, a *New Statesman* columnist, said his vision of New Labour was men in "white suits" and accused it of failing to appeal to the aspirations of black voters in areas such as Brixton, where he lives.

Colin Brown

Ahead of the Prime Minister

Paul Collins, 19, the first time-voter who clashed with the Prime Minister after John Major referred to his Mohican hairstyle and called him a cockerel, lost all his hair a couple of years ago following chemotherapy treatment. The student now sports a brilliant red coiffure. He successfully beat bone cancer and now affirms: "If I wanted to I could grow a full head of hair. I don't want to talk about my illness except to say that it is in the past. How anyone wears their hair is a personal matter."

Tony Heath

Major on course among real runners and riders

Colin Brown

Only jockeys, fools and horses would normally have been at the Newmarket stables in a sharp east wind on a Friday afternoon. But this was day 25 of the general election campaign and John Major went on a walkabout among the racehorses accompanied by two coach-loads of reporters and film crews.

The aim was to draw attention to Labour's wobbles over the threat to privatise the Tote, chaired by Lord Wyatt - whose daughter, Petronella, a *Daily Telegraph* journalist was on hand to declare the star horse a less seasoned runner than Mr Major. The Prime Minister, no great judge of horse flesh, and more at home at cricket grounds,

met one of the Aga Khan's horses, trained by Luca Cumani at the Bedford stables, and said: "It's not a bad life, is it?" Perhaps he had noted they are allowed to sleep on shredded copies of yesterday's newspapers liberally sprinkled with manure.

The surreal life of a prime minister chasing the favourite in the race for 1 May began with a rowdy public meeting at Norwich where Neil Kinnock's former adviser, Charles Clarke, is defending an inherited Labour majority of 4,350.

Facing a hostile crowd, the Prime Minister said: "This election is starting to come alive. The more it becomes alive, the less the Labour Party people will be able to hide their leader."

A young seller of the *Big Is-*

sue, heckled Mr Major about the homeless and was told that the Tories would tell Labour local councils to hand over their empty homes after a year to agencies who would fill them. "Put that in your *Big Issue*," he said.

One man shouted obscenities and was told by a police constable: "You can speak to him, but don't swear. Now that's fair, isn't it?" Zero tolerance for bad language had its immediate calming effect. The crowd changed its chant: "Get your soup and slippers, Major. You're boring."

Mr Major got back into the battle bus telling aides: "That was great." His aide said: "He feels this kind of campaigning - with the leader on the hustings - has not been seen for years."

THE HURRIED VOTER'S GUIDE

THE CAMPAIGN

Europe dominated the day, overshadowing the launch of Labour's business manifesto. Labour was crowding over revelations that large numbers of Conservative MPs, including the agriculture minister Angela Browning, were speaking out against a single currency in their election addresses and newsletters. Mrs Browning effectively won the support of the Prime Minister who indicated that her stance was in line with the party manifesto.

In the Conservative camp, there was jubilation over the leading of European Commission plans to extend the Working Time Directive to more employees. John Major said no Conservative government would accept such a move.

The business launch went ahead as planned, with figures including Terence Cornan and Tim Waterstone of Waterstone's book shops endorsing the party. The Liberal Democrats kept to their usual formula, with an early-morning attack on both other parties for ignoring the elderly. The party also launched its Party Election Broadcast on television.

In it, Paddy Ashdown described how he stood up to local racism: "My wife and I were threatened and we had police protecting us 24 hours around the clock and I began to understand what it was like to be an Asian in this country," he said.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The Tories' attack on Labour centred on the effects of its policies on Europe. The adoption of the social chapter would lead to over-regulation and job losses, the party said. "The weasel words Labour have used to avoid telling the truth will cut no ice with the British people," the Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind said at a Scottish press conference.

Labour claimed that, on the contrary, it was now the party of business and was "the entrepreneurs' champion". "Up and down the country, scores of Conservative candidates are thumbing their noses at John Major in their election addresses," the shadow Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, said.

The party's deputy leader, John Prescott, added: "John Major... has been snubbed by Neil Hamilton, snubbed by local Conservative associations and now he is being defied by up to 200 Tory candidates. This is a party that cannot be led, with a leader who cannot lead."

The Liberal Democrats backed Labour: "The Government may want to make sure that Britain is stuck in the Victorian age in terms of its workplace safeguards and rights, but I certainly don't," Paddy Ashdown said.

GOOD DAY



ONE TO REMEMBER

Another candidate has announced her intention to stand in the Tatton constituency. The Transformer, a seven-foot-tall transvestite, stands for "the major themes of modern society - music, fashion, glamour, sex, equality, hope, escapism and, of course, sleaze". She has vowed to confront Hamilton on the campaign trail, wearing a dress consisting of seven-together brown envelopes and £50 notes. Has Christine Hamilton finally met her match?

BAD DAY

HOGWASH

It was right to sell military training jobs to the private sector. Hundreds of thousands of civilians in the armed forces have not reached the standard of human rights and democratic values such as the UK. But many of them are better than the alternatives.

THE OTHER PARTIES

The Green Party launched its manifesto for the second time yesterday, claiming the media had ignored the first launch last month. David Taylor, a party spokesman, said they would continue launching the manifesto to ensure fair coverage. The Greens will fight 90 seats compared with 225 in 1992.

The Natural Law Party promised to create "heaven on Earth" at its manifesto launch in London yesterday. Geoffrey Clements, the party's leader said: "When we look around at the galaxies and the Earth they are governed by natural law. But what is absent in this country is that same natural law." The party is contesting 300 seats.

MEDIA STAR

Book caught up with Agriculture Minister Angela Browning yesterday in the village of Halstead, near Exeter, to deliver her election manifesto. The reporters gave chase, and she was seen running through a field. She tried to perform a stunt on the single currency, and released a statement saying: "I think the media have been misled when you read it, and the Prime Minister said: 'You will see it is in line with party policy.'"

Pastries, punks and pep talks ... on the road with Tony, John and Paddy



Once, when caught misbehaving at school, I was given the choice of serving one-hour detention or writing an essay about the inside of a ping-pong ball. It wasn't obvious then, but writing about the inside of the ball was good practice for covering Tony Blair's election campaign from the rarefied confines of one of his battle buses.

After two weeks, and thousands of miles, on the road, up the tracks and in the air, the 50 or so press corps - whose employers have each paid £7,500 for a ticket - knows no more about the Labour leader than it did at the start. Except, perhaps, that his university reputation for acting and learning his lines is well-deserved.

There are three buses bearing the legends "Leading Britain", "Into the future" and "With Tony Blair". They are interchangeable, although, as the Labour leader pointed out (borrowing from a columnist), the drivers of "Into the future" and "With Tony Blair" are under orders not to allow "Walls of Samsaras" to come between them.

Nerves are fraying, not least because of the mostly vacuous nature of the visits being undertaken by Mr Blair. Since he began his campaign, there have been largely stage-managed question-and-answer sessions in Derby, Kidsgrove and Basildon. There have been school visits in Redditch, walkabouts in Exeter, Northampton and Stirling and university and factory visits in Warwick and Croydon.

Most of these are put on for the benefit of the local media. In a way, they are

granted interviews with Mr Blair, while the national press are kept well back. Questions shouted desperately at him by national hacks are greeted with a blank smile.

Again and again, Labour's Big Ideas about reduced class sizes for five-, six- and seven-year-olds, windfall taxes and shorter NHS waiting lists are trotted out - for soundbite consumption only.

During Q&As, Mr Blair often takes in his breath, stands back, utters the words "You know..." and launches into what looks like an impromptu diversion. In fact, these moments of improvisation are often seen more than once. Nevertheless, members of the audience, seeing them for the first time, say they are impressed by his off-the-cuff messages and the sincerity they convey.

Journalists stand in fenced pens during walkabouts, are often excluded from parts of visits and are kept well away from the Labour leader. So tight is the rein on which reporters are kept that on Wednesday the Press Association correspondent was asked to take off her brown coat during a photo opportunity because it was deemed to be a depressing colour on a sunny day.

There is an upside, but even that benefits Mr Blair. The organisation - first-class briefings, facilities for sending words and pictures, even refreshments to keep the mood upbeat - all help to keep the Blair message in our papers and on our screens.

The problem is that, with Labour playing safe, behaving more like government than opposition, interest in that message

The most striking image to date of John Major's tour has been the Prime Minister being heckled in the market square at Brecon by a student with a bright red mohican haircut. And that is the way the Tory campaign strategists like it. Mr Major is fulfilling his commitment to the party conference last year to be out on the street fighting to win against all the odds.

He is approaching his campaign like the leader of the opposition and is attempting to unsettle Labour which means making himself available to challenge Tony Blair at every opportunity, from the soapbox, the street and the new platform attached to his battle bus.

His rallying speech to party supporters at the JCB plant on Thursday was almost exclusively devoted to challenges to Mr Blair.

It is Mr Major's stock in trade on the street; he gets the biggest cheers for accusing Mr Blair of hypocrisy on education for his son. He frequently jokes about Mr Blair being chicken for not facing him in a television debate.

The soapbox is also Mr Major's natural battleground, the Brixton boy trying to convince the unconvertible on the streets.

It is a style of campaigning foreign to many modern politicians briefed on television technique. But Mr Major is also acutely aware of the cameras. Never prepare to kick a ball, kiss a child or pull a pint for the cameras in case the image backfires. At the Bradford Museum of Pho-

tography, he refused to hold a camera, leaving it to his wife, Norma, to steal the show.

There have been times when he tetchily refused to answer questions. On the racecourse at Aintree on Monday, after the Grand National, Mr Major was prepared to do "a doorstep" with reporters on the IRA's failure to stop the race, but reporters were warned off mentioning Neil Hamilton and Martin Bell. Jon Sopel of the BBC was ordered by an aide "not to spoil it" by asking questions that had been put to Mr Major in the morning.

The adoption of Mr Hamilton and the disarray in the Labour ranks on privatisation, the unions and Scotland have produced a transformation in his mood. From Mr Snappy on Tuesday, Mr Major had become Mr Accessible on Wednesday, even chatting happily to the press on board his leased British Midland 737 as it flew back from Brecon. He appeared genuinely relaxed and enjoying taking the fight to Labour at last. At yesterday's press conference he turned his fire on Labour spin doctors - accusing them of treating their leader as if he had "the Plague".

Addressing the assembled throng of reporters, he said Labour was intent on keeping Mr Blair "away from our questioning, [and] away from you rough lot whenever they possibly can".

He went on: "They are keeping Mr Blair out of the way as if he was the Plague or New Black Death as no doubt they would call it. It reminds me of the old cry - bring out your dead."

The Paddywagon began to roll last Monday - several days after the larger caravans of the main protagonists had already moved off. In the last five days we have covered around 3,000 miles by coach and by air, eaten several kilos of sandwiches together with a daily dose of Danish pastry courtesy of Titan Airlines.

The media posse on the "Battle Bus" is not as large as it was. The *Financial Times* has bailed out and the *Guardian* makes only cameo appearances. Yesterday there were just 12 reporters, whereas 40 are accredited.

Unlike his cardboard cut-out rivals, Mr Ashdown is accessible and approachable. Presumably that is because he hasn't got a cat in hell's chance of becoming Prime Minister and can say what he likes without forensic examination by political journalists searching for inconsistencies.

Not that you would know that from listening to him. When he speaks, he will routinely use the phrases "we will" and "what we will do" in reference to the political decisions a Liberal Democrat government would take. This is fantasy politics, but it is fun.

It can also be hectic. On Thursday the usual 8am press conference was followed by a trip through east London to the City airport in Docklands. From there we flew in our smallish ATR42 turbo-prop aircraft to Edinburgh for an 11.30 press conference where Mr Ashdown "put a kill" on his politics. Then a sports college at noon where students were seen punishing themselves

on treadmills and a group of pensioners frolicked in the swimming-pool.

Thence to the Scottish borders for a pastoral interlude at a farm near Galashiels. Back to Edinburgh, from where we flew to an out-of-season Southport, "a poor man's Blackpool", by some accounts.

There, Mr Ashdown preached animatedly to the converted. Not so much "go out there and prepare for government", as "don't listen to the polls, go out and grab a few votes".

Back on the coach at 8.15pm for a 9.30pm flight from Manchester to Stansted and a coach back to central London where we arrived at 11.30. Mr Ashdown had already been whisked in a helicopter back from Southport to London for a television appearance. And yesterday, a press conference at 8am... and so on. Even the super-fit Lib-Dem leader admitted on the coach-fit to Northolt airfield that he was "knackered".

By all accounts the Paddywagon has a far more agreeable atmosphere than the battle buses of the Lib Dems' rivals. Mr Ashdown regularly briefs journalists, although he spends most of his time in a small compartment at the back of the coach.

There is a sweet little armchair for him to sit in and a television. Journalists are welcomed to the inner sanctum for one-to-one interviews, where Mr Ashdown is "minded" by Ian Wright, an amiable "travelling press officer".

It is the life of a political gypsy. Only 20 days to go.



Business on the Internet... all potential, no performance, right? With a company

that's growing at a rate of 5,000% per year, Jeff Bezos couldn't disagree more. He's CEO and founder of Amazon.com, the world's largest and most prosperous on-line bookstore.

"The Internet can help you gain or lose a lot of customers very quickly" says Jeff.

So he hooked up with DIGITAL. "It's critical to work with a computer company that

has experience helping "The Internet can mean people do business

the fast lane

on the net," he says. "It's for your business also nice that DIGITAL

or the highway to hell.

has It all depends on who you hook up with." the

world's widest range of high performance servers." To support its rapid growth,

Amazon.com has upgraded its DIGITAL AlphaServer™ 2000 series to two DIGITAL

AlphaServer 8400s, ideal for high growth corporations. "We're using AlphaServer systems

to run our key on-line electronic commerce systems as well as our entire range of back

office and financial applications," Bezos says. The fact is, DIGITAL has lots of ways to help

you transform Internet potential into Internet profits... Blazing

servers, network components, proven expertise plus world-

class AltaVista™ Internet business software. Everything

you need to make Internet profits a lot less virtual. To make the DIGITAL edge your own,

call us today on 0800 595 200, e-mail moreinfo@digital.com or visit us at www.digital.com

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election '97

There's a shock in store for the canvassers



Supermarkets prove an unlikely haven from election. **Glenda Cooper reports**

If you feel that it is impossible to get away from political hectoring, there is at least one area that promises to be an election-free zone. All but one of the major supermarket chains are barring politicians from handing out stickers, leafleting customers or kissing babies in their stores.

Already the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, has twice been turned away from a Sainsbury shop in his Pentlands constituency in Edinburgh because he had not informed them he was coming. And the Asda store in Govan, Glasgow, told Alex Salmond, the leader of the Scottish National Party, not to campaign inside the shop or on the car park. Mr Salmond claimed he had only gone there for lunch.

But while many might see election-free zones as a relief, Dr Richard North, the Referendum Party candidate for South Derbyshire, is accusing supermarkets of "direct interference in the democratic process" after he was refused permission to hand out leaflets in his local Sainsbury's car park.

"In past days when most people shopped in high-street centres, there was free access to voters. Now with giant megastores like Sainsbury and Asda creaming off the trade from the high

streets they are also closing down access to people by blocking off their premises to election workers. This is a disgrace," he said yesterday.

But Asda, Sainsbury and Safeway, who have all forbidden canvassing, say that rather than conflicting with the democratic process they are non-political organisations who do not want to subject their customers to canvassers. Only Tesco

The megastores are closing down access to people

has taken the opposing view, saying that their mixed base of customers is an ideal place for politicians to find out what real people are thinking.

Bernard Hughes, the company's government affairs manager, said that they had made amendments to their usual policy in the light of the election. "On Friday night and Saturday people are in supermarkets. That's where the constituents are... and this is where the local politicians can deal with them."



Fast work: Referendum Party candidate Dr Richard North (centre) has five minutes to canvass shoppers (top left) at Sainsbury's in Swadlincote, Derbyshire, before store manager Keith Hodley (top right, on the left) tells him he must stop, or leave. Photographs: Rul Veria

"At places like Tesco and Sainsbury's you find someone earning £4,000 next to someone earning £40,000 in a queue buying our products from a 13p tin to a £25 bottle of champagne." He said all stores had been sent strict guidelines and they would be scrupulously fair to all parties.

The other three chains said that they will allow politicians to visit if prior notice was given. "Candidates are free to

Candidates are free to walk round, not to kiss babies

walk around. But we would object most strongly to them kissing babies or accosting customers in the store," Phil Reed, Asda's public relations manager, said.

He said that the policy was being applied across all stores and it was not an infringement of democracy. "In our view it's the last thing customers want."

Bill Hamilton, the director of public affairs for Safeway, said that the company similarly did not allow canvassing although

it did not object to candidates kissing babies. "We didn't want to say they couldn't do anything. What we did want to inform the main parties that they could have visits by candidates and bring national figures if they wanted a photo opportunity but no formal canvassing such as giving out stickers."

He reckoned that around 200 candidates would have made visits to the stores by the time the election took place.

And he said Malcolm Rifkind had not been allowed in because he had not made prior arrangements. "We have to be equal to all parties. We can't allow political activists just to turn up."

"There would be so much confusion it would be impossible. If Labour and the Tories and the Liberals turned up at the same time there could be a lot of aggravation."

So far Safeway's in Reigate, Surrey, is the only shop due to see all three main candidates but Mr Hamilton said that people should not be put off going there as a result. "Say a visit lasts half an hour, one and a half hours over six weeks is not too much."

Diane Lamh at Sainsbury said that they had also issued guidelines to the store allowing visits but banning campaigning and canvassing.

QUOTES OF THE DAY

The Tory party makes the Borgias look like a happy family

John Prescott

This is certainly no way to run a country. It doesn't have to be like this. It's not difficult to see what needs to be done. Liberal Democrat election broadcast

Look, we are not making empty promises. This is the blueprint to create heaven on earth. By using reliable technology that we know works, transcendental meditation and yoga flying, we can achieve our goals. Natural Law Party deputy leader Peter Warburton launches their manifesto

The Government is saying wait and see, but we can all see very clearly what is likely to happen anyway. Lady Olga Maitland on joining the Single Currency

It's not long enough and it's going to be 23. John Major on 18 years of Conservative rule

Labour is now the party for business - the entrepreneurs' champion. Tony Blair, launching his party's business manifesto

The Labour Party are keeping the Labour leader away from you rough lot whenever they possibly can. They are keeping Mr Blair out of the way like he was the Plague or New Black Death as no doubt they would call it. John Major at the Conservative news conference

It is not some tiny mythical group of so-called fat cats who will suffer but the ordinary hard-working people of this country. Michael Heseltine on the windfall tax

We are not giving people just a few bob. Businessman Paul Sykes on his offer to fund Conservative candidates who oppose the single currency

It's not a bad life, is it, old boy? John Major stroking a racehorse at Newmarket stables

Compiled by Ben Summers

Tory rebel army declares war on single currency

Euro-sceptic message has spread to constituencies, says Anthony Bevins

The Conservative candidates' revolt against the European single currency, given John Major's blessing yesterday, has already taken hold out in the constituencies.

As *The Independent* reported yesterday, it extends far beyond the hard-core hand of known Euro-sceptics who led the resistance to the Maastricht Treaty, and now drives into the party's loyalist heartland.

While Norman Lamont, in Harrogate, and Sir Ivan Lawrence QC, in Burton, could be expected to tell their voters bluntly that they stand for "No surrender", Lady Olga Maitland, in Sutton and Cheam, and Julian Brazier, in Canterbury, have also joined the growing army of currency-sceptics.

Lady Olga, who was a ministerial aide in the last Parliament, told the BBC radio *World at One* programme yesterday that she had issued a leaflet, saying, "No Single Currency in Europe".

"The Government was saying 'wait and see', she said. 'But we can all see very clearly what is likely to happen anyway. I think we should all be looking

ahead and I think it would be dishonest to sit on the fence."

Exploiting the same Conservative loophole as Angela Browning, Mr Brazier told his electorate: "A single currency would mean sending all of Britain's gold reserves to Frankfurt, where the new European Central Bank would control them."

"Britain would have handed over control for ever of British interest rates and fiscal policy to unelected bankers abroad."

Sir Ivan says in a newsletter to his constituents: "We are a sovereign nation state. We must have the right to run our own economy. Yet a single currency would mean a central bank - almost certainly in Frankfurt - with the power to make economic conditions for the whole of the European Community, including Britain."

"Our powers to set exchange rates with external countries, interest rates and tax rates would be handed over to unelected,

unaccountable European bankers..."

"Britain's gold and foreign exchange reserves, worth over £30 billion, would be transferred to the European Central Bank as a condition of joining the single currency. The pound would be abolished and substituted by the euro - we may or may not be allowed to have our Queen's head on it."

Sir Peter Tapsell says in his election address to Louth and Horncastle voters: "If we abolish the pound, give up control of our interest rates and send our Gold Reserves to Frankfurt, we cease to be an independent self-governing country."

"There would be little point in electing anyone to represent you in the Westminster 'Parliament'. Power would be wielded by foreigners in the Commission in Brussels and the European Central Bank at Frankfurt, as Chancellor Kohl demands. Would Labour resist this?"

"If you wrote to your MP with a complaint, the reply would be: 'I am sorry. These decisions are now taken in Europe by foreigners who we did not elect, whom we cannot dismiss.' The German Foreign Minister has publicly urged you not to vote Conservative. Ask yourself: Why? I give you this pledge: I shall never vote to join a Single European Currency or a Federal Europe."

Nicholas Budgen, another Euro-sceptic, says in his election address: "I am opposed, in principle, to a single currency. I believe that Labour is more likely than the Conservatives to take us into a single currency."

"A single currency can only succeed if it is supported by a European Super State. I am also opposed, in principle, to such a state and to the surrender of the sovereignty of the British people which would occur if one were set up."

On that point, as Mr Major and Mrs Browning said yesterday, Mr Budgen has the fullest possible endorsement of the Conservative Party manifesto.

GREEN PARTY MANIFESTO

Make EU more accountable

Nicholas Schoon
Environment Correspondent

The Green Party launched its manifesto yesterday with policies to pull Britain out of the European Union, scrap all the United Kingdom's nuclear weapons and take the railways back into public ownership.

The party is fielding only 90 candidates at this election, as opposed to 255 the last time round in 1992. But that is still enough to earn it a party political broadcast, which will be transmitted next week.

The Greens are also concentrating on seats which are safe for the two main parties, because they believe that their vote is badly squeezed in marginals.

In its 23 years of existence the party has soared to the dizzy heights of winning 15 per cent of the votes in the 1989 European Parliament elections - and down to the lows of near bankruptcy, internal strife, splits

and hundreds of lost deposits at the last general election. Overall, it won only 1.5 per cent of the vote where it stood. The highest vote it got in 1992 was 3.4 per cent in the Woodspring constituency south of Bristol.

Now the party is concentrating fewer of its slim resources on fighting general elections. Instead, it is concentrating more on local council elections - it has about 100 council members - and backing direct action campaigns such as those against road schemes.

It also wrote two parliamentary bills concerned with energy saving in homes and road-traffic reduction which, after much modification and watering down, have become Acts of Parliament. Both were taken up as Private Members Bills by Liberal Democrat MPs.

At yesterday's modest manifesto launch in London the press wanted to know if Swampy, the near-legendary



Swampy: Anti-roads hero who supports Green values

anti-roads protester, was backing the Greens.

They were told that he was not a member but a supporter of the party's values. The Greens were paying for the mobile telephone used by Swampy and fellow protesters against Manchester airport's second runway scheme. "But it's not about media heroes," David Tylor, one of the

Greens' two principal speakers, said.

The party is strongly opposed to a single European currency. Unless this is dropped and major Green reforms to make the union more accountable and decentralised are adopted, the manifesto says that "we will argue for withdrawal".

Under health policy, it wants "funds diverted from the search for elusive cures to research into alternative therapies and preventative measures".

A Green government would give local councils legal powers to take over empty buildings to house the homeless.

The party favours higher taxes on pollution, energy and natural resources and reductions in income tax and national insurance contributions. It continues to support a basic income, under which every adult would be given a weekly payment by the state to replace the current system of benefits and tax allowances.



by Aanonymous

The young businesswoman in the lemon suit was fabulous. Actually, "lemon" did little justice to the violent green-tinted, luminous yellowness of her, and "fabulous" was similarly too mild a word to describe the psychological impact of her conversion.

"In 1979 I voted for Mrs Thatcher because I thought Britain needed a change", she told the press conference.

"Now Britain needs to take a new step forward." And she turned her small, bird-like head to look straight at the Candidate.

He nodded gravely, fighting the temptation to give his widest grin, and wondered why he had not - in 1979 - seen in Thatcher what women like this had seen. Just that had been right all those elections ago - 19-year-old thrusting

Lemonwoman, or his caring 26-year-old self? Would there have been a fair way to cure the union bosses of their Seventies megalomania; or a decent method to lighten the burden of subsidising useless, rusty old state industries? Perhaps there would, but Labour - split, fractious, Trot-entranced Labour - had been in no position to make it happen. Which made the terrifying fluorescent entrepreneur (hobbies given as "playing the saxophone and riding a 500cc motorbike") a better man than he had been.

Whatever. Now - at any rate - they were together. As with the Oslo Middle East peace accords, or with any settlement in Northern Ireland, you could only make progress by obliterating the past - including your own favourite bits. No more King Billy, Derry sieges, Hebron massacres, 1926 General Strikes or Lewin Wick pickets; just him and Lemonwoman building a New Britain today. And just an election to go before they could start.

With which thought he re-focused on the people in the room. In the middle sat the friendly businessman in charcoal suits, though punctuated here and there by a tweed, advertising the presence of a chief executive priding himself on his quirkiness - a miraculous ensemble, like a deputation of rabbis in a mosque. Flanking them were two great wedges of journalists, from the perspiring political editors to the weasel-faced lobby boys. These guys would decide whether the Wednesday wobble was over, and the Grey Man's party was in trouble. The Candidate himself needed some positive coverage from them, but could not determine whether he'd get it.

To increase his chances, Friend Bobby and Big Al were working the aisles - here sidling up to a flashy back with a word of encouragement, or there smiling at a teenage weasel. Al, he knew, would do his stuff using the sabre and bludgeon ("what absolute f---ing rubbish! How can you write such crap!") while dispensing genuine bits of information. Bobby's weapons were the épée and the derring, suggesting with what contempt and astonishment stories that said X rather than Y would be treated. It was astonishing, he thought, what a shower journalists were; though when he had first become leader, he had not always thought so.

To complicate things he could see Mr Brown's staffers also briefing the pack: there was Goodtime Charlie - all laidback bluster and football talk; and over there, chatting to the financial specialists, was Young Einstein - a bespectacled economics expert.

What he hated most were the bloody TV crews, their cameramen always falling over, their mobile phones always ringing mid-speech (usually with the first bars to "Hi-ho, bi-ho" or something similarly ghastly. "Ghastly" was a good word, too), their producers, assistants and reporters in constant conflagration, and their sodding white lights always in your eyes. It aged him, he knew it did.

Enough! He tried to see beyond the lights and search out friends and enemies among the audience, extending his neck as far from his collar as it would go, and scanning from side to side. Not, of course (he reflected), that your friends turned out to be so very friendly. Just yesterday the supernumerated DJ on Radio

Pensioner, who normally invited his guests to say something important to the nation, had decided to impress his bosses by glugging a draught of HRT and digging his false teeth into the Candidate's ankle. Sure, you could anticipate the funny little man from the *Express*, with his chipmunk face and yellow tie. But if the ITN Zeus gave you both barrels over privatisation or taxes, then you were in difficulty.

Concentrate! Sure, he was tired and the campaign felt interminable but this was the moment they had waited for. Concentrate! And try to stop thinking (he thought) of how much he would like to get on Lemonwoman's hike and ride pillion across the Mojave. "Questions?"

No one believes that they're going to be re-elected so no one is interested in Ken's plan

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God's Banker: 'He was given Mafia money and he made poor use of it'

Andrew Gumbel

For 15 years the mystery of Roberto Calvi's death has been left spectacularly hanging, in much the same way that the body of the Italian banker was found dangling from a piece of scaffolding beneath Blackfriars Bridge in London on June 18, 1982.

Was it suicide or murder? Was it really credible that an elegantly dressed businessman would stuff his pockets with banknotes and 11 1/2-pounds of bricks, and then string himself up from a precarious platform just above the Thames? On the other hand, was it really conceivable that professional killers would have gone to the trouble to do this to him?

At last, it seems something approaching an answer is at hand. This week Italian prosecutors issued arrest warrants for two key figures in the Calvi saga: his friend and confidant, the Sardinian businessman Flavio Carboni, and the notorious treasurer of Cosa Nostra, Pippo Calo.

The hypothesis, backed by 90 pages of closely argued deposition papers, is that Calvi was killed by the Mafia because he had either misused or embezzled millions of dollars of their assets. Since his fraudulent financial empire was on the brink of collapse, the prosecutors claim, he risked revealing the details of his Mafia links to the state authorities.

The indictments of Carboni and Calo are the result of five years of investigation based on the testimony of several senior members of the Mafia who

have decided to collaborate. The new evidence confirms many earlier suspicions about Calvi's murky links with the criminal underworld and the notorious P2 Masonic lodge, and casts new light on his extraordinary dealings with the cream of Italy's financial establishment, including the Vatican bank.

Calvi's descent into the shadows originated from his association with Michele Sindona, a Sicilian financier who enjoyed similar access to the Italian business and political elite and the Vatican, but in reality was a fraudster in cahoots with the Mafia. Sindona too died mysteriously, poisoned inside the maximum security prison where he was serving a life sentence for the murder of the magistrate who exposed his financial dealings.

Through the networks established by Sindona, Calvi began using his Banco Ambrosiano to circumvent Italy's strict laws on the export of foreign currency. Then, in the late 1970s, he acted as Cosa Nostra's chief money-lauder, siphoning off billions of dollars from the heroin trade into a network of front companies stretching from Europe to the Bahamas. His financial trickery included illegal transactions with the Institute for Religious Works, also known as the Vatican bank, as well as alleged dealings with Licio Gelli, the grandmaster of the P2 lodge, the secret network that penetrated deep into the Italian state and is suspected of attempting to subvert it.

Carboni was, according to the prosecutors, the Mafia's

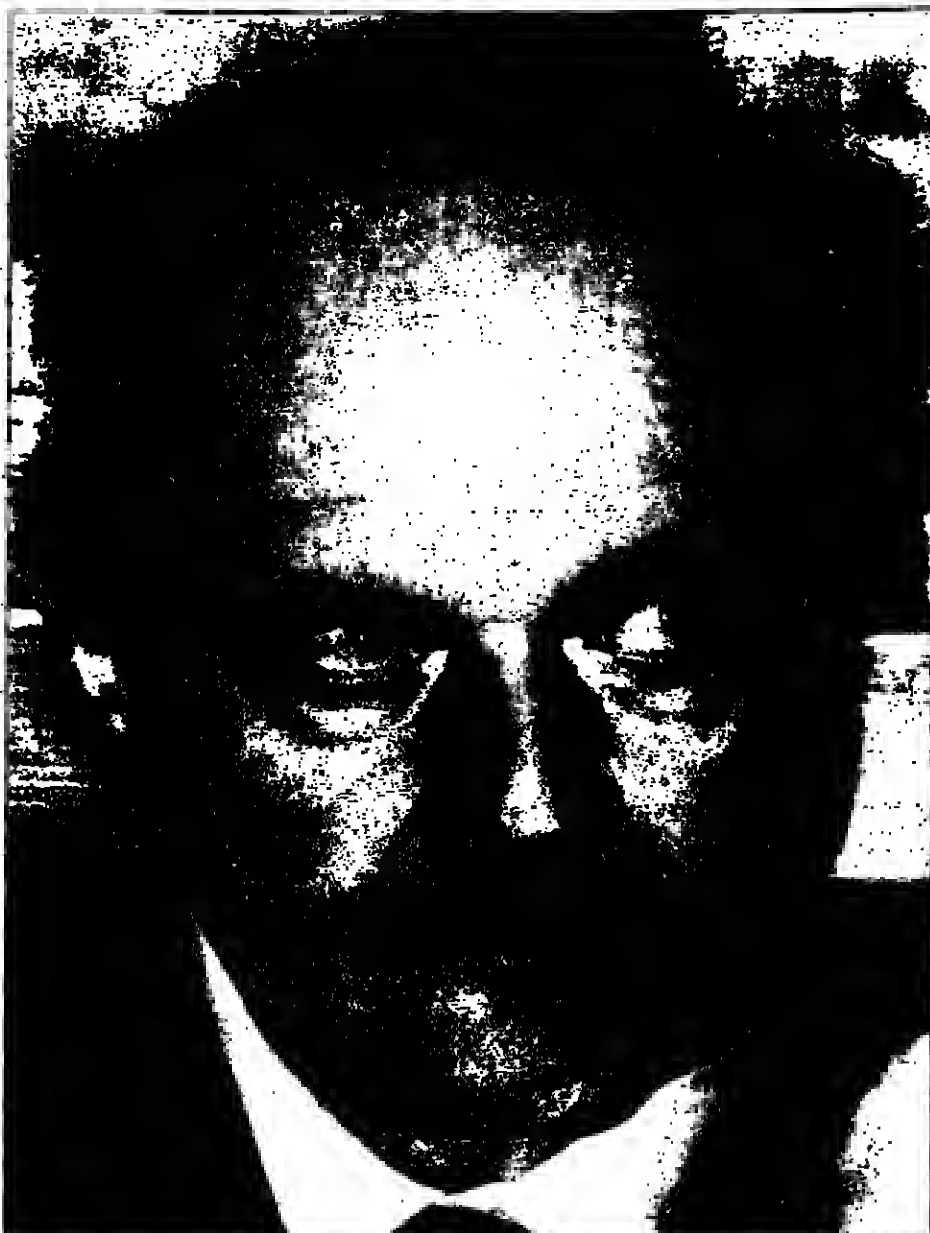
produced Calvi to Calo and other Mafia bosses and the man who, ultimately, betrayed him and set up the mechanism for his murder. A week before his death, with his creditors closing in on him and the Vatican urging repayment of at least £154m that he did not have, Calvi undertook a frantic final journey across Europe. His itinerary was never clear, but appears to have included stops in Austria and Switzerland before his arrival in London.

He had asked Carboni to arrange a discreet bolt-hole for him in London and was horrified to find himself booked into the cavernous Chelsea Cloisters. According to the deposition papers, Carboni deliberately picked the Cloisters because of its size and because it had a back entrance enabling Mafia thugs to enter unnoticed.

Calvi was thus abducted and strangled somewhere between the hotel and Blackfriars Bridge with the same orange cord that was later found tied around his neck.

"Calvi was killed out of revenge," the Mafia super-informer Tommaso Buscetta has testified. "He was given Mafia money to recycle and he made poor use of it."

Why has it taken so long to reach this conclusion? Part of the reason is the British judicial system which, perhaps because of a lack of familiarity with the extraordinary workings of the Mafia, has been reluctant to accept the testimony of Mafia informants. It took a detective agency hired by the Calvi family



Murdered? Italian banker Roberto Calvi (above) whose body was found dangling on an orange rope beneath Blackfriars Bridge in London (below) on a June morning in 1982.

and the revelations of the Mafia informers to unearth the full ramifications of what had happened. "Had we known at the time what we now know, a completely different verdict would have been found," the foreman of the second jury, Bruce Kitchen, said as far back as the mid-1980s.

One remaining question is the identity of the killers. One name mentioned by some of the Mafia informers is Francesco Di Carlo, a Sicilian thug jailed in Britain in 1987 for drugs trafficking. Di Carlo says he was approached to carry out the murder but was not available at the time. He has pointed the finger, instead, at Vincenzo Castiglia, a member of the Calvi family who was shot and killed shortly after the Calvi affair.



The final, frightened days of Calvi

The approach came almost exactly 15 years ago in classic Calvi fashion: oblique, elliptic and through an intermediary. In April 1982 I was Rome correspondent of the Financial Times. A lawyer acquaintance called, inviting me to lunch. I arrived to find a third man at the table, who first merely identified himself as "a representative."

Only well into the meal did it emerge, precisely whom he represented in Rome: Roberto Calvi, the mysterious and secretive chairman of Banco Ambrosiano, implicated in scandal after scandal, yet still head of what on paper at least was the largest private banking group in Italy. Gradually I realised I was being inspected and weighed up. How interesting it might be, the third man mused just before we parted. If I could meet "Il Presidente" in person.

A couple of days later, the phone rang. An interview had been arranged for later that week in Milan, days before what would prove to be Ambrosiano's last annual general meeting of shareholders. I was taken into the Ambrosiano building, through a maze of security checks.

Always and obsessively private, Calvi would not be seeing me in his own office, where I might divine some clue to his personality. Instead, we met in what seemed a small anteroom, drab and featureless, just off a grey marble corridor. The image, months before he would be found hanging, lingers to this day. He was a bulky, ungainly man, of utterly undistinguished looks. He sat half slumped behind a desk, his suit dishevelled as if he had slept in it.

Sometimes he would drum the edge of his desk with his fingertips. A nervous tic on the left side of his mouth, beneath the thin moustache, periodically made him grimace as he spoke. For a man of his status and apparent power, his language was ill-educated, coarse and almost peasant-like.

He imparted no new information, insisting he was victim of a conspiracy, hounded and persecuted by police, magistrates and politicians and others



Rupert Cornwell

Author, 'God's Banker'

ers whose names he would not speak. He deflected questions about recent reports of a \$600 million "hole" at its shadowy subsidiary in Lima, Peru. Ambrosiano, he insisted, was sound. But two things Calvi could not conceal. One was exhaustion. The other was fear.

To a grotesque degree he possessed the common Italian belief that life is controlled by dark and secret forces. Once he commanded these forces, but by early 1982 the protector himself desperately needed protection. The previous year Calvi had been briefly jailed on charges of stock manipulation. He had been exposed as a member of the P2 freemasons lodge. Worst of all, the gigantic fraud on which Ambrosiano was built could no longer be concealed.

Whether or not the Mafia killed him, Calvi and Ambrosiano beyond doubt were part of the murky underside of Italian life at that time, where perverted free masonry, the secret services, organised crime and right-wing terrorism blurred into one. As his problems mounted, he felt in increasing physical danger.

The elaborate protection within the bank was one sign. Outside, a platoon of bodyguards and the armour plated Alfa Romeos in which he travelled were costing Lire 4 million (£2,000) a day. He took to carrying a pistol in his briefcase to the office. At the end he insisted his daughter Anna leave Italy for her own safety, telling her of his fears for his life. If Italian investigators this time are right, those fears were amply justified.

Between Beethoven and the minarets

Christoph de Bellis
Ankara

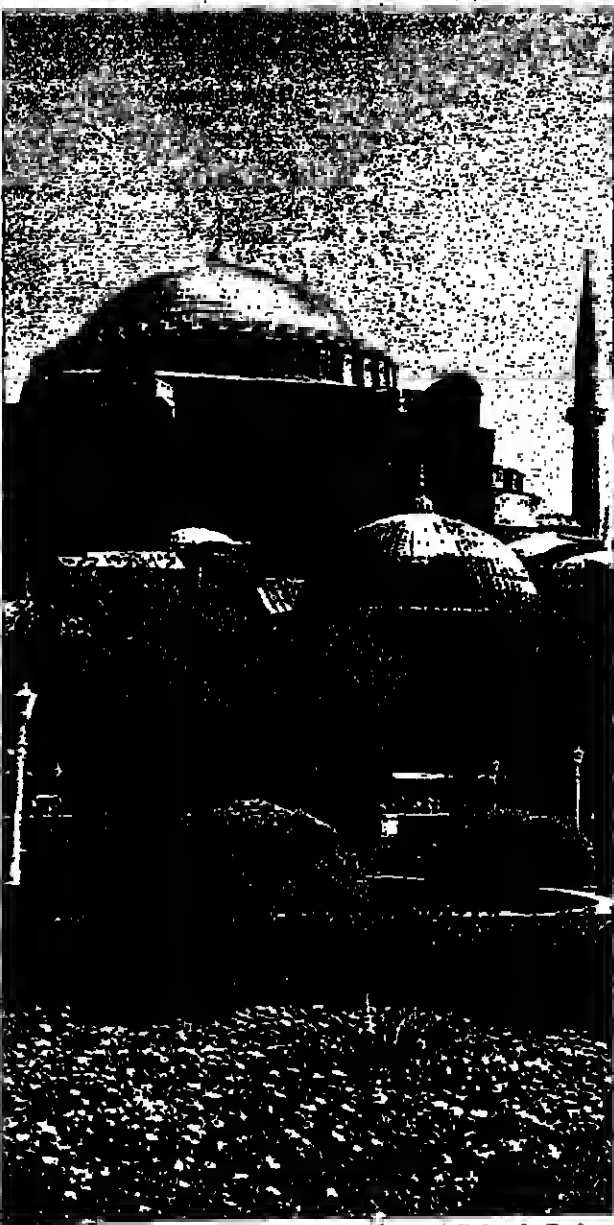
"This is a picture of modern Turkey," proclaimed President Suleyman Demirel in Ankara at the end of last month. However, this landscape of 8000 music-lovers, assembled to hear a stirring performance of Beethoven's ninth symphony, may not have been to the liking of Ismail Kahraman. When Turkey's Islamic-minded minister of culture entered the concert hall he was greeted by a chorus of his own - boos and whistles.

Mr Kahraman has upset Western-oriented compatriots by publicly preferring the construction of mosques over concert-hall culture. What concert cancellations indicate is that Turks are dividing on simple lines - Europe versus the Middle East, English versus Arabic. As culture in Turkey becomes more elastic, the exchange between secularists and Islamists get shriller and Turkey's coalition government, which contains both, looks more fragile.

Nowhere are divisions clearer than in the field of education. Secularists say the European model promoted by Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey, is under threat. They united last month to support a teacher-trainer who refused to instruct trainees wearing Islamic-style headscarves. Now they applaud the efforts of Turkey's interventionist military to reverse a dilution of the system which Ataturk established.

When the generals loudly demanded a return to secular values in February, their most contentious requirement was a crackdown on religious schools, called Imam Hatips.

The secularist line is that the Imam Hatips, which are vocational schools set up to supply clergy, have exceeded their brief. Not only do Imam Hatips produce more than 10 times the graduates required for mosque duty, but the young Turks they produce seem unenthusiastic about the secular, pro-Western principles on which the republic was founded.



Istanbul's minarets: Secular values are declining in Turkey

A recent survey found 80 per cent of Turks schooled in Imam Hatips favour the Islamisation of Turkey's secular legal system, while only 19 per cent consider Turkey a European country. Imam Hatip representation was thin at the Beethoven concert; less than 2 per cent of graduates confess a weakness for

European classical music. The military's demands on the subject of education have been couched by an uncontroverted call for youngsters to be prevented from leaving school at the age of 11. However, in pressing for a three-year extension to mandatory education, the generals took over.

also want Imam Hatips only to accept Turks aged 14 and above.

This does not suit the religious schools, which prefer their recruits to be young and impressionable. Neither does it please the pro-Islamist Welfare Party, the senior partner in Turkey's ruling coalition.

Welfare looks on religious education with a benevolent eye. They want Imam Hatips to be accepted as an integral part of the education system. The military has other plans. In show-downs with Necmettin Erbakan, the Welfare party Prime Minister, smart money tends to go on the generals, who often benefit from the support of the Islamists' coalition partner, the centre-right True Path Party.

The problem on this occasion is that True Path is not being cooperative. Although Tansu Ciller, the True Path leader, has said the military's demands will be implemented in full, she seems reluctant to let Welfare emerge as the champion of Imam Hatips, where almost half a million young Turks - all voters of tomorrow - are being schooled.

More than 150 Imam Hatips were opened while Mrs Ciller was herself prime minister.

Military tempers are said to have been frayed by tense relations with Mrs Ciller and by the government's conspicuous failure to implement other secular measures, which the generals demanded more than a month ago. The generals are unmoved by arguments that it was they themselves, in their promotion of Islam as an antidote to Communism, who made religious instruction compulsory in high schools. They claim the support of secularist groups, which have been lobbying hard across the country.

Mr Erbakan and Mrs Ciller are trying to find a formula acceptable to all sides. But most observers suspect that the generals will be satisfied when all their demands have been implemented. The last time a government ignored the military's advice, in 1979, the generals took over.

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India prepares for its sixth PM in six years

Jan McGirk
New Delhi

Political manoeuvres in India, the world's largest democracy, are starting to rival Italy for surprise tactics as New Delhi prepares for its sixth prime minister in just over six years following yesterday's vote of confidence.

No Indian prime minister from outside Congress, the party of the Nehru/Gandhi dynasty which presided over India's birth as a nation, has ever completed a full five year term.

Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda was "hurting his way to extinction," political columnist Vinod Mehta said prior to the crucial vote. Since most Indians dread any political deal which might unleash religious separatism, it seemed pragmatic to sacrifice Mr Gowda for stability. Few had suspected him to last even 10 months in charge of his squabbling coalition.

Yet most analysts were expecting unlikely political alliances to emerge in order to prevent the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) from ruling. It is only a half century since independence

and most families in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh (former East Pakistan) still mourn for relatives slaughtered during partition because of their religion. Secularism riots blazed across India just five years ago and tension still runs high.

The BJP holds 162 seats, the largest single majority in Parliament, far more than the Congress party's 140. (The United Front's 178 seats are patched together from over a dozen regional parties.) But BJP leader Atal Behari Vajpayee, 70, failed last spring to come up with sufficient allies to form a government.

The Congress party, as the traditional advocate of secularism, supported Mr Gowda's motley 13-party alliance, primarily to block the BJP. When Sitaran Kesri, the Congress president, announced on 31 March that he would no longer prop up Mr Gowda's United Front, he blamed the Prime Minister for betraying their mutual stance against communalism by meeting the notorious fundamentalist Bal Thackeray. The fiery leader of Shiv Sena (Shiva's Army), Thackeray is the bogeyman who helped mutate

cosmopolitan Bombay into conservative Mumbai, now controlled by the BJP.

Anger against the Congress president for sending the government into free fall without bothering to consult his colleagues was evident in some of the fist-shaking speeches which resounded in the Lok Sabha during ten hours of long-winded debate yesterday. But most of the ire came from Mr Kesri's own party members.

A Congress stalwart, Mr Kesri used to crouch and touch the feet of Indira Gandhi and her sons whenever he met them. Some dismissed him as a toady. But, as charges of corruption mounted against former leaders of his party, Mr Kesri was outraged and became fearful for his own reputation. His sudden wrath against Mr Gowda, 63, took even insiders by surprise.

President Shankar Dayal Sharma holds the trump card: he can ask the BJP to again try to assemble a government, or turn to the Congress Party, or allow the old United Front coalition to continue with a new leader. He may also dissolve parliament and call for snap elections.



A Congress Party supporter waits outside its headquarters in New Delhi ahead of yesterday's vote

Photograph: AP

Big Brother keeps an eye on the media underlings

Stephen Vines
Hong Kong

The *South China Morning Post*, which has been a loyal supporter of the Hong Kong government for most of its history, is to have the founding editor of the Chinese government's mouthpiece, *China Daily*, installed in an office next door to the editor's. Officially, Feng Xi Liang, 75, will act as a consultant.

The appointment of Mr Feng, which has yet to be announced, has caused considerable disquiet among the newspaper's staff, who fear that it heralds greater Chinese political influence over the paper.

A staff member said: "No one's happy about this. We're waiting to see what happens, but we fear the worst."

Asked what influence Mr Feng would have over the content of the paper, Jonathan Fenby, the *Post*'s editor and a former *Observer* editor, would only say: "I am the editor of the paper." He added: "We'll go on as we have been going and you can judge that from what's in the paper."

It is understood Mr Fenby was not consulted about Mr Feng's appointment, but he refused to comment on this issue. The *Post* is owned by the tycoon Robert Kuok, who bought control from Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation. Mr Kuok is

香港 Hong Kong handover

an adviser to the Chinese government and regarded as well connected to China's leaders.

Mr Feng is well known in Chinese journalistic circles. He has lived in Hong Kong for some years, where he served as an editorial adviser to the defunct English-language *Window* magazine, which was known for its avid support of the Chinese government.

All editors of China's major state-run publications are Communist Party members and report to the party's propaganda department. It is unlikely Mr Feng is an exception, particularly as the *China Daily* was created to be the government's chosen means of communication with the outside world.

The *South China Morning Post* maintains that it is pursuing an independent line in covering Hong Kong and China news but this view is not shared by many observers. The *Post*'s pro-British stance has been long abandoned and the paper shows marked caution in reporting and commenting on events likely to anger the Chinese government. A manage-

ment directive on the eve of last year's anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre instructed editorial staff to ensure the word "massacre" did not appear in the paper the following day.

In 1995 the *Post* scrapped the Lily Wong cartoon series, which was famous for its criticism of China. The strip is now appearing in the *Independent*.

Sir Percy Cradock, former British ambassador to China, and an outspoken critic of Hong Kong's Governor, Chris Patten, was taken on to the *Post*'s board of directors last year. Sir Percy has declined a Foreign Office invitation to be present at the Hong Kong handover ceremonies. He may be awaiting an invitation from the new rulers.

Emily Lau, a pro-democracy legislator and former journalist, said last night that she was not surprised about Mr Feng's appointment. She said: "They have the best of both worlds, Sir Percy and Feng Xi Liang ... I think now I'll call it the *New China Post*."

The *Post*, which has a higher international profile than

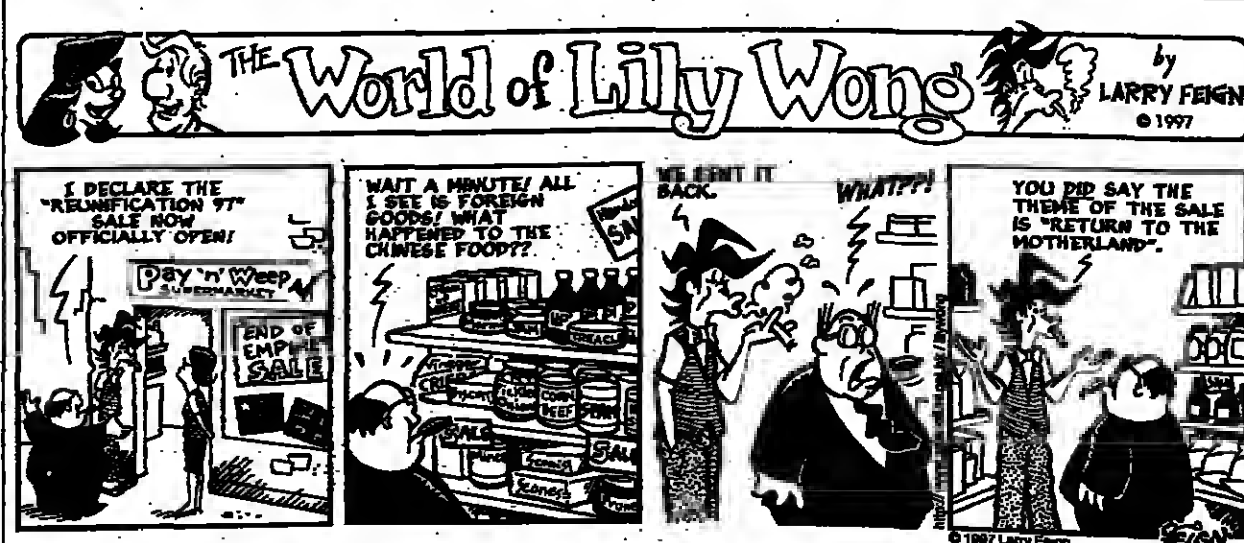
most Hong Kong newspapers, is not alone in having political appointees join its staff. The Sing Tao group, which publishes the rival English-language *Hongkong Standard*, has the former press secretary to Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's authoritarian Senior Minister, as a special adviser to its owner.

The influential *Ming Pao* paper has an increasing number of mainland Chinese journalists writing its editorials. They have joined a mini-influx of formerly China-based journalists who are employed by practically all local newspapers.

Most of the Hong Kong media, particularly the electronic media, have become keen supporters of the new order. The local television news increasingly resembles the output of China's Central Television station. Sensitive subjects are avoided and prominent critics of the Chinese government appear far less often than they used to. Pressure on the media from China is mainly exerted through proprietors.

Tung Chee-hwa, who will head the first post-colonial government, also appears to like to work through proprietors.

This week he convened a meeting of the heads of Chinese-language newspaper companies. He reportedly told them he intended to keep in touch on a regular basis.



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Mobutu defies rebel threat to take capital

Zaire's beleaguered president will not bow to ultimatum, writes Ed O'Loughlin in Kinshasa

With a deadline for his effective surrender about to expire, Zaire's beleaguered President, Mobutu Sese Seko, seems determined to ignore the threats and warnings from rebel leader Laurent Kabila.

The streets of Kinshasa were calm yesterday, despite a three-day ultimatum issued on Wednesday by Mr Kabila for President Mobutu to stand down, or face further military action. And while rebel radio broadcasts have warned foreign residents to leave Kinshasa, there was no sign of a mass exodus of Westerners.

The rebels, who took the key southern mining centre of Lubumbashi in midweek, claim to have military units within 200km of Kinshasa, and to have infiltrated fifth-columnists into the capital itself. Western diplomats are sceptical of this claim and believe the nearest rebel forces are still several hundred kilometres away, across the

rainforests and broken roads of central Zaire.

A Pentagon spokesman said in Washington on Tuesday that 1,200 US Marines and 400 other military personnel are in a state of high alert in the region, ready to go into Kinshasa to rescue the 430 US citizens living there. France, Belgium and Britain also have contingents on standby in the Congolese capital of Brazzaville, just across the Congo River from Kinshasa.

Western diplomats in Zaire appear to have embarked on a delicate mission to persuade Mr Mobutu to stand aside, but without provoking a panicked reaction from the regime. This week Belgium and the US, both former allies of Mr Mobutu, called on him to give up power.

On Thursday the US State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said any strategic reason for backing Mr Mobutu had ended with the Cold War.

"Considering his state of health, the fact that all the institutions he created are decrepit, bankrupt, not credible and that the rebels have taken over at least half of the country, it was necessary to call again publicly for this kind of transition," Mr Burns said.

That same day, however, the American ambassador to Zaire, Daniel Simpson, was among several Western diplomats who paid courtesy calls on General Lubulu Bolongo, the military Prime Minister appointed by Mr Mobutu when he introduced a state of emergency. Afterwards Mr Simpson said he still believed Mr Mobutu had a role to play in ensuring peaceful change in Zaire.

"I don't think that Mobutu or any other one person is responsible for all the problems of this country," he said.

Yesterday General Bolongo announced a 28-member national salvation government,



Heading home: A refugee carrying her possessions back to the eastern city of Goma, which she fled to avoid the fighting

with top army generals in charge of the defence and interior ministries.

Speculation in Kinshasa centres not so much on whether Mr

Mobutu's rule will end, as when and how. If Mr Mobutu flees, he is likely to seek refuge in the south of France, where he owns a luxurious villa and where he

has recently undergone treatment for cancer.

President Mobutu has shown himself to be a great survivor in his 32 years of rule, and few

observers are yet prepared to write him off. Diplomats believe that some members of Mr Mobutu's entourage are still urging him to play his hand out

to the end, as the President's abdication would rob them of any lingering chance they have to hold on to Zaire's vast mineral wealth.

significant shorts

EC strikes deal with US over anti-Cuba laws

The European Commission said yesterday it had struck a deal with the United States settling its trade dispute over the US Helms-Burton anti-Cuba legislation.

European Union Trade Commissioner, Sir Leon Brittan, said in a statement that the deal should allow the EU to suspend a panel that has been set up within the Geneva-based World Trade Organisation.

Sir Leon said the deal would also "chart a path towards a longer-term solution through amendment of the Helms Burton Act", which seeks to isolate the government of Fidel Castro by stopping investment. **Reuters - Brussels**

Angola swears in government

Angola yesterday swore in a government of national unity intended to cement peace between rivals who brought the country to its knees during nearly two decades of civil war. President José Eduardo dos Santos said in a speech at a ceremony attended by 13 foreign heads of state that the new government would be no miracle cure for the country's many ills. **Reuters - Angola**

UN soldiers in torture charges

The Belgian military court said yesterday that it had arrested one soldier and was investigating others over allegations that they tortured children while serving with United Nations forces in Somalia in 1993.

The investigations were prompted by pictures and stories printed earlier this month in Belgium's *Het Laatste Nieuws* newspaper. The pictures showed soldiers, their faces obscured, holding a Somali youth over a fire and forcing others to eat worms. **Reuters - Brussels**

Gunman kills Serbian minister

A gunman killed the feared commander of Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic's security apparatus as he dined with his son in a Belgrade restaurant yesterday. Media reports said Deputy Interior Minister Radovan Stojicic died instantly at his table. **Reuters - Belgrade**

Albanian papers go to press

Several Albanian newspapers resumed publication yesterday after a month-long interruption, in a further sign the country was returning to normal. Two independent titles in Tirana put out their first editions in a month yesterday, raising to four the number of dailies that have returned this week after parliament relaxed restrictions on local media. **Reuters - Tirana**

Telephones reach Tokelau

The president of the last country in the world to get telephone service became its first citizen to make an international call Friday. Aliki Faipule Palima Teao, head of Tokelau's government, called the New Zealand Prime Minister, Jim Bolger, to thank him for contributing \$1m to the \$2.76m project. **AP - Wellington**

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SATURDAY 12 APRIL 1997 • THE INDEPENDENT

Trial backlash: Killers 'not acting on specific orders but as part of long conflict against Kurds'

Fall-out from a secret war

Robert Fisk
Beirut

The hit-team whose Berlin murder trial has caused a diplomatic rupture between Europe and Iran were acting under a "green light" from an Iranian Revolutionary Guard intelligence committee which decided more than 10 years ago that all members of armed groups opposed to the Iranian regime must be "neutralised". There was, according to a man closely associated with the thinking of the Iranian state on such matters, no personal decision taken by individual members of the Iranian leadership, as the judges in the Berlin trial suggested.

European ambassadors are being withdrawn from Tehran - and Bonn and Tehran have each expelled four diplomats - after judges at the trial of an Iranian and three Lebanese found guilty of murdering four Kurdish opposition figures in 1992 blamed Iran's leadership for ordering the deaths. "It's a misunderstanding of how these things happen," the very well-con-

nected source told the *Independent* in Beirut yesterday. "These liquidations are not carried out on the specific orders of President Rafsanjani or the spiritual guide Ali Khamenei - there are long-standing orders to neutralise all armed opposition wherever it is, even in Europe. They come from the Pasdar (Revolutionary Guard) committee and they are not going to change, whatever Europe does."

The Iranians regard their war with the Kurds as an undercover campaign in which dozens of deaths go unrecorded by both sides. "I was in Oroumieh (in Iranian Kurdistan) and my Iranian guide told me we could go no further because six Pasdars had been murdered by armed Kurds the previous week," the man told me. "I said I hadn't heard this news. He said that five or six Iranian Pasdars were killed every week or so, maybe a hundred in a year - the Kurds come across from Iraq. It's a secret war, you see - the Iranians don't give their own casualty figures for security reasons."

As for the Iranian leadership, the

source said, they would hear news of assassinations and "make inquiries as to what had been happening and they would be told why such-and-such an event took place. These liquidations will carry on - they don't care. Their most important aim is the security of the regime. Maybe methods will change but the regime's security will always come first and that means killing opponents who use violence."

In the early days of the Islamic Republic, the regime's enemies might be targeted by individuals who sought the leadership's support for their actions. This was the case in the first assassination attempt against the Shah's last prime minister, Shapur Bakhtiar. The idea to kill him in Paris was first suggested by a pro-Iranian Lebanese and it now transpires that Ayatollah Khomeini himself expressed scepticism as to whether the assassins could be successful. Assured that they could - although they subsequently failed in their attempt - Khomeini did personally agree to let the hit-team try to kill Bakhtiar. No such decisions were

any longer taken by the leadership. The man closely associated with Iran in these matters was deeply cynical about Europe's reaction to the Berlin murders. "What about Greenpeace when the French sank the ship in New Zealand and killed a man?" he asked. "Was that a 'green light' from the French defence ministry or the Elysée? What about the Israeli assassination of Ali Ayash, the Hamas activist (and bomber) by the Israeli intelligence last year? Did the green light to murder him come from Israeli intelligence or from (then prime minister) Shimon Peres? It must have come from Peres - but you didn't debate that. What we do is to neutralise our armed enemies. The Israelis were neutralising their armed enemies."

In northern Lebanon, a mysterious murder in Tripoli has still not been forgotten by those involved in the ruthless intelligence war. Anxious to kill a Lebanese close to the pro-Iranian Hizbollah called Hassan Moussawi, the source claims that a French DGSE (intelligence) team - anxious to eliminate

those who were killing French troops of the multinational force in Beirut in the early 1980s - was sent to kill Moussawi as he lay in a hospital bed in Tripoli. Hassan Moussawi was indeed assassinated - but he was a peasant who happened to have the same name as the Hizbollah associate, who is still alive today. Those close to Iran believe that Moussawi's murder was sanctioned by the Elysée Palace.

"This diplomatic crisis will last three or four months," the source said, reflecting an Iranian view of the affair which will change if Europe decides to isolate Iran to the degree President Bill Clinton has been demanding. "Maybe the Iranians will think about the fact that Europe is showing that it all stands together. But I don't think it means anything in the long term. It will blow over. In the end, the regime's security remains first and foremost. The CIA openly states that it has \$20m to destabilise Iran and Iraq - and it supports the armed Kurds who want to destroy the Tehran regime. So why shouldn't Iran fight back?"



Bolts from the blue: Israeli soldiers scanning the rooftops for Palestinian stone-throwers in Hebron, where there have been daily clashes

Photograph: AP

Arafat tip leads Israelis to killers

Patrick Cockburn
Jerusalem

Israel says the bomber who killed three people in Tel Aviv last month was not trying to commit suicide but died because explosives in a bag he was holding blew up prematurely.

The revelation comes after Israel arrested a six-member cell of Islamic militants in the village Surif, north of Hebron, who allegedly killed 11 Israelis and wounded 49 over the last 18 months.

Ahmed Rahman Ismail Rahman Ranimat, 25, the leader of the cell, led Israeli troops to the grave of Sgt

Sharon Edri, an Israeli soldier, shot dead last year when he got into a car driven by members of the group. The discovery of his body is causing embarrassment to the Israeli police who at one stage said they believed that Sgt Edri had disappeared for personal reasons.

The arrest of alleged members of the cell, which formed part of the military wing of Hamas, is also causing some embarrassment to the Israeli security forces.

They had believed the rash of attacks in the area was being carried out by the so-called "Halboul Cell" of the Popular Front for the Liberation of

Palestine, a militant but secular organisation in a neighbouring town.

The break-up of the cell appears to have come partly as the result of co-operation with the Palestinian Preventive Security after pressure from the United States on Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader, to resume security co-operation with Israel.

"We are talking about a murderous cell, which killed five Israelis in the region of Gfeta Tirosh, three Israelis in the Tel Aviv coffee house, two soldiers along the Hebron-Jerusalem road and also kidnapped and

murdered Sharon Edri in cold blood."

The discovery of the cell somewhat deflates the theory of Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, that Mr Arafat gave "a green light" for the Tel Aviv attack, since the Surif group appears to have attacked whenever an opportunity offered. Mousa Ranimat, one of the Ranimat clan, which is powerful in Surif, accidentally blew himself up in the Apropro coffee house in Tel Aviv three weeks ago.

The cell, which started to operate at the end of 1995, did not find it difficult to kill Israelis. Their method of operation

shows the impossibility of full protection against such attacks.

All of the cell members looked like Israelis, spoke Hebrew because they had worked in Israel and, for the same reason, knew their way around.

They had a car with yellow Israeli licence plates, so they could operate easily within Israel. All were in their twenties and most had been arrested for Hamas activities.

Two of the six cell members were arrested within areas controlled by the Palestinian Authority, after the CIA put pressure on Mr Arafat. Despite the obsessive focus on security in Israel, actual security mea-

sures are frequently slack. Israeli soldiers often hitchhike to or from their bases. All the Hamas group had to do to get Sgt Sharon Edri, who was buried yesterday, into their car, was to offer him a lift. When he became suspicious they shot him.

Mr Arafat will want Israel to pay a price for the resumption of limited security co-operation.

Ze'ev Schiff, a security specialist on the daily *Ha'aretz*, says the Palestinian leader is saying to the US that he is willing to act against Hamas but that "now Israel has to do its part by halting the construction of Har Homa and the expansion of the settlements."

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Today's forecast: unsettled, with scattered reforms

How do we decide what is important? No, this is not a question about the meaning of life, but about the way a modern democratic society orders its priorities. Because it is obvious that this kind of election campaign is not the best way to do it.

The language of priorities is not just the religion of socialism, it is the belief-system of politics generally. It is the language of political speeches, of manifestos and opinion polls (and often of newspaper leader-writers). But there is a disjunction between what are often described as the "most important" issues and what really concerns people in the day-to-day.

Perhaps this gap explains the dreamlike unreality of the election campaign, which has bounced about between central and side-issues in an alarmingly casual way. Mostly, it has not even been about the issues that the politicians profess to think are "important".

Tony Blair has, with an American trick of rhetoric, described his top three priorities as education, education and education. And yet his policies for our schools and colleges have hardly featured in the campaign. In the opinion polls, unemployment is usually at the top of the list of "most important" issues, yet Labour's plans to get a quarter of a million people off welfare and into work are only just beginning to come under scrutiny. Like our

professed willingness to vote for higher taxes to pay for increased spending, this seems a classic area for voter hypocrisy, because there is no evidence that plans to tackle unemployment actually change the way anyone votes.

A good case has often been made out that the advent of a single European currency presents our democracy with the biggest decision it has had to take since the war. Yet it only began to feature in the campaign yesterday, and then (inevitably?) only as a "Tory split" story.

Meanwhile, in the real world this past week, the subject on most people's lips (and on their cancer-endangered skins) has been the weather. This is not merely the English living up to their national stereotype, but an undeniably "important" issue. Why has summer arrived two or three months already? It is well established that population growth and economic activity has changed the climate, and will go on doing so for decades. But apart from some jarringly apocalyptic words from John Gummer, the Environment Secretary, the growing understanding of cause and effect has yet to make the connection to policy, political argument and action. Nor will it by 1 May. There are some things our political process simply can't cope with.

This is not to say that the election is point-



less, or somehow anti-democratic. It is simply that in the absence of big policy questions between the parties, the purpose of the campaign is primarily as a character test. It is about choosing which team can best be trusted (or distrusted least) to make the best (or least bad) decisions about the "important" issues, as they come up, and whatever they are. In the analogies of political science, the voters in this election are not going shopping, having to choose between baskets of policies, but are choosing an investment trust, in which the policies of the management team are less important than their record, and their record in turn less important than their general dependability.

On this model, the weakening of party loyalties is not simply a product of the convergence of the main parties on the centre ground of politics, but a response to the dispersal of voters' interests and causes.

The environment is typical of the categories of problems that cannot easily be organised into two rival world-views, between which the voters can choose using the first-past-the-post system. The green debate takes place largely outside the party-political process, yet issues such as climate change are utterly political. They can only be tackled by collective action, at national and international level, and the priority accorded to them can only be decided

by some form of democratic decision-making. Other excluded issues are beginning to burst the seams of our restrictive, antiquated system. The Referendum Party, the People's Trust, the Pro-Life Alliance and tactical voting campaigns are evidence that some people's passionate concerns are not being accommodated.

The trouble with all these is that they tend to be top-down rather than bottom-up initiatives. But we should not be depressed about this, because it implies that a new politics is waiting to be born. It might need top-down change to stimulate it, but it would arise naturally from a concerned and active citizenry if it were not stifled by the present set-up.

That is why reform of the House of Lords, self-rule for Scotland, Wales and London, and a referendum on the voting system, would be liberating and transforming. Lords reform alone would upgrade the forum in which important issues can be debated. Above all, however, a reformed voting system would give expression to dispersed competing interests and allow the people to make more meaningful decisions about what matters – as well as simply about which team gets to walk into Whitehall. So you could say constitutional reform – reform of the way Britain is governed – is actually the "most important" issue of this election. It affects everything else.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Stag-hunting ban: National Trust bullied by the animal rights puritans

Sir: I am a member of the National Trust and I choose not to hunt, but I am appalled at the decision of the Trust's council to ban stag-hunting (report, 11 April). The Trust cannot now logically deny any activist who presents a scientific report which demonstrates that animal cruelty occurs.

In the light of this precedent how can the Trust do anything other than ban fox-hunting? How can it do anything other than ban fishing,

which can hardly be said to be stress-free for the fish?

Wider issues than animal welfare should have been taken into account. Habitats suitable for hunting are bio-diverse and support many other species. They are now at risk to commercial forestry and the desolate monoculture of arable farming. Hunting is part of a cultural heritage which stretches back into pre-history. It remains one of our last links with

our natural "hunter-gatherer" past. Who is to say which is the most cruel: that an animal lives in a natural environment in a natural way for all of its life and suffers some stress and cruelty in its last few hours; that an animal is shot, if lucky, cleanly, and if unlucky left to die a lingering death; that an animal lives the whole of its life in an unnatural environment such as a cage, stall, enclosure or field, is often fed an unnatural diet and is selectively

bred to exaggerate characteristics such as milk production?

The Trust should be ashamed of itself. It has let itself be bullied by the New Puritans of the animal rights movement.

LESLEY ELLIS
Allon, Hampshire

Sir: Chasing red deer with hounds has been found to be probably cruel. Who'd have thought it? The next

subject for these intrepid scientists to research should be the effect on small mammals and birds of the ghastly and protracted process of being caught, teased, tortured, and terminated by domestic cats. My own beloved moggie performs such atrocities daily.

There is an inconsistency when a nation of cat-lovers criticises a handful of huntsmen.

MELVIN GOLDSMITH
Purleigh, Essex

LETTER from THE EDITOR

I haven't been offered a bribe, yet. There have been heavy and indignant phone calls from most of the political parties – we monitor them, trying to ensure that we are getting parity of abuse – and at least one (journalistically) improper suggestion. "We won't forget this," has been snarled at me more than once.

This is roughly what I expected editing a newspaper during an election campaign to be like. But, so far, there have been no satisfyingly concrete offers of cash, preferment, material goods or government contracts in return for pulling David Aaronovitch off this, setting Polly Toynbee on to that, or altering the drift of the front page. No extortion, no payola, nothing sleazy at all. Maybe the campaign isn't quite as fever pitch just yet.

On the other hand ... the money demanded by the political parties from newspapers to get our correspondents on to the leaders' buses may not be extortion, but it is beginning to feel extortionate. As Steve Boggan, travelling on the Tony Blair bus convoy, says in today's paper, they are seeing very little of the leaders and are able to do too little in the way of proper, informative reporting. For the main parties, there are around 50 journalists each, paying £7,500 or so for the privilege: the £375,000 must pay for a lot more than the hired buses and the coffees.

I can justify this to our shareholders if we are getting hot, fresh stories. But it's a little steep for giving reporters the privilege of hearing soundbites and seeing the back of the Blair coach speeding along the motorway. And the money obviously matters a lot to the parties. One of our photographers, David Rose, was obstructed by Labour campaign workers while trying to photograph a Blair walkabout in Northampton. Though Rose was in a public place, he was told he couldn't try to take pictures because he wasn't "accredited". The following day, this was spelt out: he wouldn't have any more problems ... provided he wrote a cheque out straightaway for his £7,500. "We are not a charity," snapped the party

official. Well, thanks. We'd gathered that. Any readers who are losing sleep about the prospect of relations between the press and the political parties getting too cosy during this campaign can, I think, set their minds at rest.

Finally, a few weeks ago I mentioned in passing that in the Twenties, Bolsheviks apparently called their children by what they thought were Western names, such as Embryo and Vinaigrette. Now Mr Salonen writes from Vantaa, Finland, to say that in the Soviet Union many people admired the achievements of their own

country, too: "This fact was reflected in the children's names – such as Energy, Tractor and The Second Five-Year Plan."

And not only there. Despite this week's Labour wobble, and John Major's genuine self-confidence, I remain sure that Tony Blair is heading for Downing Street. This belief is reflected in the names being given to new-borns in north London at the moment. In the homey terraced streets of Kenish Town, New Labour parents have taken to giving their daughters names such as Faith, Ciabatta, Roquette and Tottie – which is short for Tough-on-the-Causes – while in the estates and flats that hug the slopes of Highgate Hill, there are whispers of baby boys being named Milbank, Mandel, and Grant, which is an abbreviation of Grant-Maintained. Any readers who have given their children similarly inspiring names are asked to write in and share their happy news.

Andrew Marr

Too coy on constitutional reform

Sir: Andrew Marr is right ("Voters try to smoke out New Labour", 10 April). Labour's lack of excitement about its own radical proposals for political reform is extraordinary. Yet Labour and the Liberal Democrats have reached agreement on how reform will be implemented (should Labour form the next government).

This agreement, together with a mandate for change from the voters, could enable a reform-minded government to put constitutional Bills through the House of Commons in the same way as other Bills – in committee, avoiding any danger of a legislative log-jam. But if the parties don't campaign for democratic reform during the election period, can they legitimately argue that they have such a mandate and break this parliamentary tradition?

Charter 88 wants to open up the election agenda and give voters an opportunity to question their would-be MPs about our system of government. On 22 April we will hold Democracy Day meetings in around 200 constituencies.

ANDREW PUDDENHAT
Charter 88
London EC1

Liberal Democrat commitment on these issues has been demonstrated by the fact that both of them were adopted and pushed through by Liberal Democrats. As campaign organisers for both bills I am well aware of their efforts.

All Green Party members should hope for a larger Liberal Democrat presence in the next parliament and therefore should confine themselves to exposing the pitiful records of the Labour and Tory parties.

RON BAILEY
(Green Party member)
London SE6

Sir: Will Toni Carver ("Stormy waters in Cornish marginal seat", 7 April) confirm the reason for David Harris standing down as MP for St Ives? His wife was ill; unfortunately she has since died. Mr Harris may well wish to be back in Parliament, but he has never tried to get back the St Ives nomination. Like many others who have known him, I sincerely hope David Harris may return to Parliament; we need men and women who maintain his standards of decency and integrity.

GODFREY B SIMMONS
Bromsgrove, Hereford and Worcester



Tableau of death: A detail from Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa*. Louvre, Paris/AGK

Acclaimed body of work behind Kelly's cadaverous casts

Sir: It is an interesting adjunct to the art/science divergence debate that the artist Antony Noel Kelly has been arrested for an activity that was considered entirely acceptable within the genre of Romanticism ("Police bail sculptor who crafts bodies", 10 April). Indeed, the anatomical realism displayed in Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa* is directly attributable to his studies from corpses and body parts "borrowed" from a local morgue.

It intrigues me that, in an era when trains are allowed to run over a woman's body for hours on end and it is considered amusing for medical students to take cadavers to parties, a serious artist is castigated for traditional methods.

TOM HARDY
London SW12

Sir: David Cohen ("The Bodies in Question", 11 April) is right to be sceptical about the use of human body parts by the sculptor Anthony Noel Kelly, but I think his blanket

dismissal of the use of casts of "found objects" is unjustified. He notes that the old masters "who risked the law to work from cadavers did so from a humanist impulse to understand life and the body". But the use of casts was also crucial to the development of a humanist art. Artists' studios contained plaster casts of limbs, heads and faces as well as of antique sculpture.

What marked these casts out as specifically "humanist" was that they were casts taken from life. Medieval artists frequently used death masks, particularly for sepulchral monuments. Casts from death masks were sometimes even superimposed on terracotta busts. This is the tradition to which Kelly belongs. Not surprisingly, these artefacts look grimly inert.

In mid-15th century Florence, however, a revolution occurred when life masks started to be used. The art historian John Pope-Hennessy has written that "with the

Channel 5 needs no Murdoch 'rescue'

Sir: Your theory that Murdoch will soon be taking over Channel 5 (Rob Brown, 7 April) faces some credibility hurdles. Certainly, the prospect of co-operation between Sky and Channel 5, particularly over sport and movies, was noted at the time Sky participated in a bid for Channel 5. However, Sky's valuation of such a prospect was presumably reflected in the level of that bid: well below that of every other applicant.

As for the listed sports events, your theory misses the fact that Channel 5 is as forbidden as Sky from showing these treasures exclusively.

True, *The Sun* and *The Sunday Times* participated in joint marketing ventures with Channel 5; but so did many other national newspapers. Editorially, they have been no more supportive of Channel 5 than any other papers.

The joint bid by Sky and Channel 5 for our channel's text service has no external significance. If I ignored this point when I wrote to you, it was because my colleague Ian Ritchie had already debunked the fantasy published in your Sunday edition, which mistakenly headlined this modest joint venture as Murdoch taking a stake in Channel 5 itself. Unfortunately, his letter was not published.

At present, both Murdoch and Sky are forbidden by law from owning more than 20 per cent of Channel 5. Even if – improbably – the incoming government changed that law, Murdoch would have to find willing sellers amongst Channel 5's shareholders. Sadly for your theory, far from "this pathetic fledgling network" needing "rescue", the present shareholders can already see that their investment is in excellent shape, and this week expressed their confidence by authorising the biggest single acquisition deal in British terrestrial television history, over and above the approved programme budget for Channel 5.

Much as I miss my former colleagues at Isleworth, and the cuddly embrace of everyone's favourite New Zealander, I will be treating Sky as simply another UK broadcaster: potentially a collaborator or competitor, depending on the circumstances.

DAVID ELSTEIN
Channel 5 Broadcasting
London WC2

Healing experiment hasn't a prayer

Sir: Three groups of patients are to be prayed for, or not, to "test" the healing power of prayer (report, 11 April).

A positive result will be hailed by theists as evidence that God exists, whilst a negative result will merely indicate to them that God did not wish to co-operate. The initial hypothesis is thus not susceptible to refutation. This farrago is not an experiment worthy of the name, and Professor Russell Stannard's standing as a scientist is seriously compromised. Have faith, by all means, but do not confuse it with science.

T P O'CONNOR
Department of Archaeological Sciences,
University of Bradford

Sir: This is not the first attempt to test the efficacy of prayer. Peter Medawar in one of his essays drew attention to the observation of Francis Galton, that of all the people in the country, the members of the Royal Family were those whose well-being was most prayed for, this being a regular feature of all church services. Hence, if prayer were effective, the health and longevity of the Royal Family should be outstanding.

Sadly, Galton found that this was not so; if anything, they enjoyed worse health and lived shorter lives than average. Medawar relates that this work caused such offence to believers that Galton subsequently suppressed it.

DR D ZUCK
London N12

Popular dads

Sir: So 80 per cent of children want more time with their fathers (report, 10 April). Why has this been interpreted as a sign that the "new father" is a myth? Perhaps we should be congratulating "new men" if their children want more time with them – if children had wanted more ice-cream sales had fallen.

APRIL BECKERLEG
Grendon Underwood, Buckinghamshire

Tory bandwagon

Sir: A picture really is worth a thousand words. I have just received a Conservative Party election leaflet containing a paragraph on transport policy and car use. It is illustrated with a picture of their idea of a typical car – a Range Rover.

STEVE MARRIOTT
Longworth, Oxfordshire

QUOTE UNQUOTE

I am not on an ego-trip. I am here to help people – Martin Bell, independent "anti-sleaze" candidate in Totton

If Martin Bell thinks being hit by shrapnel is bad, just wait until he's dealt with me over the next three weeks – Christine Hamilton, wife of Neil, the Conservative candidate for Totton

Our society has become morally reticent, even inarticulate – Dr George Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury

Advertising beauty products is easy. All you have to do is revile your customers by creating a disease called growing older and then provide a remedy that doesn't work – Anita Roddick, founder of the Body Shop

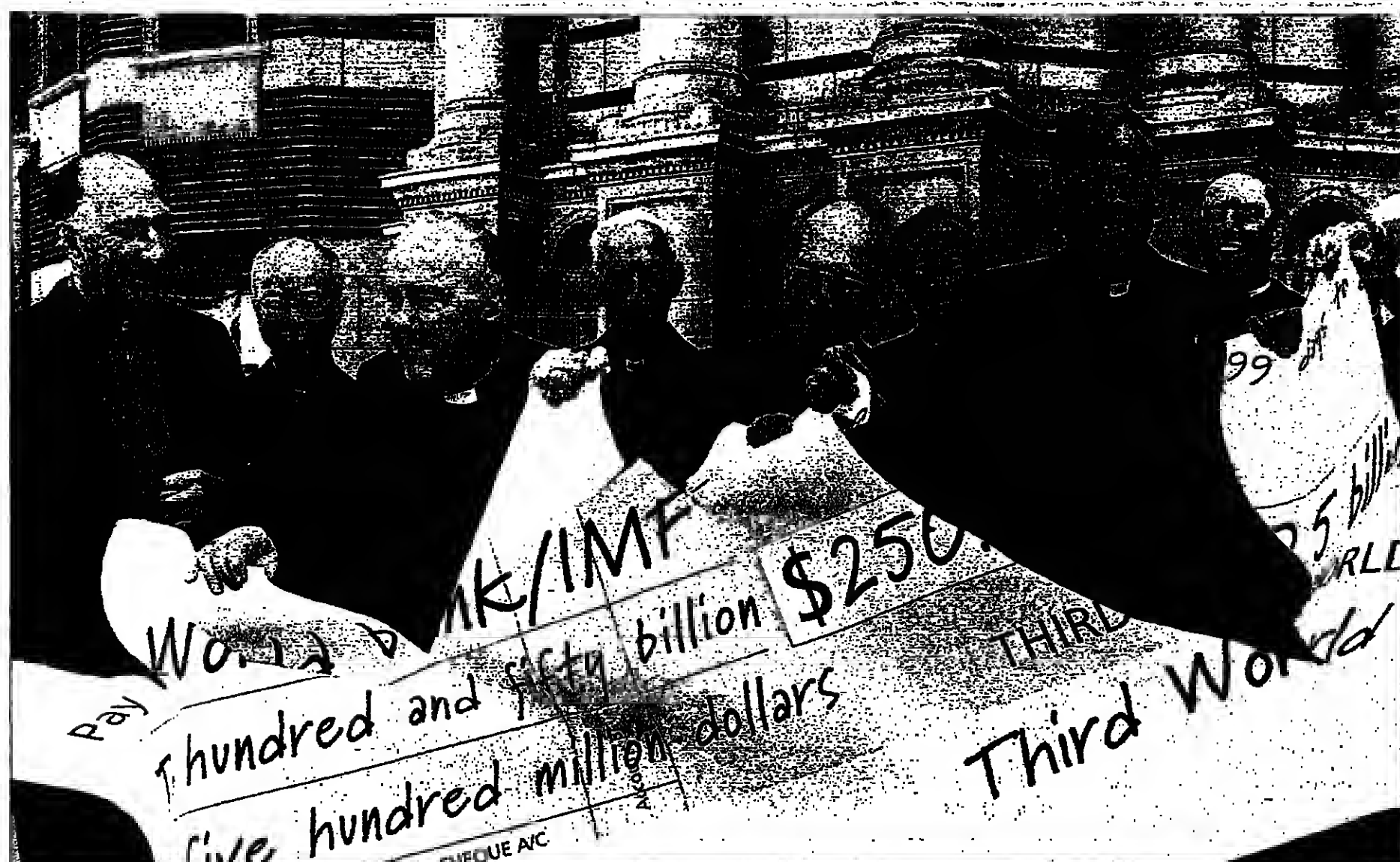
At my height, I obviously can't bring grandeur or stature to the part. I just have to be me, sort of gremilin-like – Ian Holm, actor, on his role as King Lear

Why should anyone prefer Labour margarine to "Tory butter" – caller to Robin Cook of Labour on Radio 4's "Election Call"

The middle-aged, middle-of-the-road, marginally voting society to whom all politicians are at present on their knees, has handed out a remarkably poor deal to the young – John Mortimer, writer and lawyer

the saturday story

This week the bishops spoke out on Third World debt and the jobless. But do their words carry any weight when they cross the line between Christian principles and practical economics, asks Paul Vallely



From the church pulpit to the political arena: Catholic bishops put their hands to the task of tearing up Third World debt to the West

It was once a joke about sex. How far can you go? In the early Sixties that was the question which pre-occupied young Roman Catholics anxious to discern the fine line between the venial sin of heavy petting and the mortal one of sexual intercourse. At my school there were common-room rumours about casuistical rulings under canon law which specified that sexual congress had taken place only once the penis was inserted more than one third of its length. But I digress into the traditional province of the church and that is not where we find ourselves these days.

Today religious folk seem more concerned with social and economic policy. This week we have had the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev George Carey, telling us that the nation has become morally inarticulate and demanding a rejuvenated ethical agenda in our schools. The day before we had the Bishop of Liverpool, the Right Rev David Sheppard, presenting a scathing report from the nation's 11 main denominations on unemployment which put the main political parties on the defensive with its precise demands for job creation, higher taxes and a minimum wage. And the day before that we had the Roman Catholic bishops of England and Wales issuing a statement on Third World debt which cast doubt on the effectiveness of the policies of the World Bank and the IMF. How far can you go? Dr

The gospel on social justice – but who's listening?

Carey's address at the Institute of Education in London, cogent though it was, fell pretty much into the traditional pattern of abstract clerical exhortation to moral improvement of a kind which even Margaret Thatcher would not have objected to in the old days. But Dr Sheppard's report and the Catholic bishops' demand stray into more detailed territory. How far can you go when it comes to the line between broad moral principles and detailed economic policies? Further now, perhaps, than ever before.

There will always be the stick-to-your-pulpit brigade. But while in the Thatcher years such a reaction dominated the political scene, today it finds a home only in the more hilarious of our right-wing tabloids. Even *The Daily Telegraph*, which bizarrely condemned the Sheppard report as Communist, proceeded to its more outlandish conclusions after conceding

that the churches could properly concern themselves in political matters. The right, indeed the duty, of religious leaders to speak out on politics has become part of modern political currency.

But can they offer a distinctively "Christian view" or are they simply Christians giving views which have no more value than anyone else's. "The temptation facing each one of us is to interpret Jesus's teaching to fit our preconceived ideas," says Lord Griffiths, the evangelical Christian who was for five key years head of Mrs Thatcher's Downing Street policy unit.

True, there are certain abstract principles which can be distilled from reading the Bible – that men and women are made in the image of God and thus possess divine dignity; that the right to food and clothing is God-given; that humans have their relationship to God as social creatures and not individuals; that God has a prefer-

ence for the poor and that poverty is not defined simply by a lack of food and clothing but by social exclusion and psychological dispossession. It is clear, too, that the Bible contains systematic measures for righting social injustice; that the hindrance of affluence can be as great a sin as malice; that the rich must not merely give to the poor out of their surplus; that it is not enough to aid the victims of injustice without challenging unjust structures; that the cost of fulfilling all this will be heavy, or even sacrificial.

But how do you move from here to a call to cut the employers' national insurance contributions or a judgement on the adequacy of the performance of the World Bank?

"An attempt to legislate the ideals of the Kingdom of God into practice immediately comes up against the fact that the real world is made up of fallen human beings and is not a community of saints," says Lord Griffiths. "You need evidence – and you won't find it in the Bible," says the Rev Ronald Preston, Emeritus Professor of

Social and Pastoral Theology at Manchester University, the doyen of Christian economists. "You have to have tools to analyse the situation and then be able to identify the presuppositions with which you interpret the evidence. The church has no moral purchase outside its own moral framework."

Once you have decided that full employment is desirable, says Andrew Britton, one of the original "wise men" economists and author of this week's churches' report on unemployment, "you have to discover whether in a modern economy it is feasible."

Britton's work is much bolder in the journey from moral precept to political policy than was the pre-election document issued by the Catholic bishops, entitled *The Common Good*. "We divided it into two sections – on principles and on application," says Nicholas Coote, secretary to the Catholic bishops, "and we said that on the latter we knew we might be wrong."

There were internal tussles in the Catholic group over whether the principles of

Catholic social teaching – as set out in 100 years of social philosophy developed in papal encyclicals – could be extended with integrity to certain policies. In the end support for the UN target of giving 0.7 per cent of GNP in foreign aid was ruled outside its parameters. So was a recommendation that all Catholics should join their appropriate trade union. So support for the minimum wage was more indirectly – and in basic defence that local authorities must retain their statutory duty to house the homeless was dropped. "We had to decide what was doctrine and what was just the opinions of good men," said one insider.

But this week's statement on international debt was more forthright. Generalisations in *The Common Good* about the need for debt relief have become a direct critique of the IMF and World Bank and of Western governments' tardiness in pursuing them. "The moral principle of solidarity extends worldwide," says Nicholas Coote. If IMF structural adjustment programmes are not in accordance with that, "if they throw too much burden on the poor and do not ask the rich to share it, then that collides with our moral precepts."

But the church's thinkers accept that such collisions can

be complex. "In a just modern economy three things are desirable – stable prices, full employment and free collective bargaining," says Professor Preston, "but no amount of pious talk can make you have all three at once. You have to have a trade-off."

The detailed work will always be ambiguous. Take the issue of unemployment. The logic of Bishop Sheppard's report runs thus: unemployment is a moral evil; full employment is desirable; therefore a minimum wage is needed. The response of Tory ministers has been to say that the minimum wage is counter-productive because it will destroy jobs. Professor Preston is unimpressed by such an ideological response: "If you work on the pure theory of the free market in some ideal Weberian model that might be true. But there's never been one. So the argument turns on empirical investigation and the results, it has to be said, are rather ambiguous." In France and Germany it seems to cause problems, in the United States it does not.

But for the church this is where another factor comes into play. "The minimum wage is a matter of humanity. It is a moral issue," according to Andrew Britton.

"If people are paid less than they need for basic food and shelter that's sweated labour," says Nicholas Coote. That collides with two moral principles – respect for human dignity and the duty of solidarity which says we are all our brother's keeper. "We have to have a moral baseline and say some things are not acceptable. A minimum wage is one way of addressing that. Those who say it won't work have the duty to come up with something else which will."

What the church is standing out against is the way that maximum productivity has today been elevated to a value above all others. The irony is that in attempting to make economics value-free we are in danger of ending up with a society which is value-free, too.

"Human beings work from mixed motives. Their most basic concern is for themselves and their families but they also have a sense of fellow-feeling, though it's weaker and needs to be encouraged," says Professor Preston. It is not a new thought; the great Anglican social campaigner Archbishop William Temple once observed: "A statesman who supposes that a mass of citizens can be governed without appealing to their self-interest is living in a dreamland and is a public menace. The art of government in fact is the art of so ordering public life that self-interest prompts what justice demands." And when those two get out of kilter it is right, as Ronald Preston puts it, "to rub the politician's noses in their own complicity".

In the end the search for the borderline between precept and policy is a vain exercise, insists Andrew Britton. "It's not just morality, it's theology – it is about the whole of life where the details are as important as the principle," he says. If you are considering an issue such as withdrawing benefits from the long-term unemployed unless they take a particular job, how much compulsion you are willing to impose varies according to how you regard people. "Too often we see these issues in terms of us and them rather than do unto others..." Our religious conviction helps us keep in mind that these are human beings not statistics. We try to look at the world through the eyes of the poor." In our modern political dispensation that is just as well, for our professional politicians will not. But will the intervention of the churchmen do any good? It might take years, before they know, Andrew Britton concedes, but in the long term public opinion may come round to the view that social cohesion is more important than unbridled economic success. "I think the time will come when politicians can get elected on a platform like this." Few pundits would agree. But then hope is a Christian virtue.

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jo brand's week

Gradually, various celebs are popping up to offer their support for one party or other in the run-up to the election. I'll give you three guesses who Barbara Not-A-Gusset-In-Sight-In-My-Books Cartland has plumped for. Yep, it's the jolly old true blues, of course. In Barbara's world, Europe is a threat, John Major is a gent and sleaze doesn't exist. Gentlemen have "affairs", but that, of course, is their business. In Barbara's world, wives and mistresses keep it shut and grin and bear it. Thank Gawd most of us don't have to live there any more.

I am constantly on the lookout for examples of how daft people are, and was given some good examples this week when a bloke in a big lorry came to take my car to the garage after it had a seriously misbehaved. We were chatting away about some of the sillier call-outs he'd had. These included a man calling him at three in the morning because he thought his indicators were clicking backwards and forwards too slowly, and a call-out just before Christmas dinner to a woman who had reported a "wheel

problem", which turned out to be a problem in fitting the new wheel-trims she had got for Christmas. No wonder GPs so frantically tried to prevent people calling them out over Easter for spurious reasons. We're a nation of complete wallies.

Anyone pottering about serenely in their garden in this better-than-you'd-expect-for-the-time-of-year weather, or tending their window boxes, should perhaps bear in mind that many accidents occur in such idyllic settings. Figures released recently by the Association of British Insurers show that not only do lawnmowers and hedge trimmers leave us with a number of injuries, flower pots also seem to injure us with some frequency. The deputy director of the ABI points out that gardens are dangerous places, but we can avoid accidents by taking simple precautions. Staying in watching telly sounds like a simple precaution to me.

I suppose, over the years, I have accepted that advertising exists and that there is little that can be done about it, although I don't like it. However, I do resent it

when advertising starts moralising about the way we live our lives. Those of you who do proper jobs will never have experienced the joys of Richard and Judy, who are sponsored by BT. This unfortunately has resulted in a series of little scenarios which BT has come up with in an attempt to educate us as to how we should talk to each other. Mothers are pictured shouting at wayward daughters, and husbands snapping at housebound wives. We are then treated to the BT version, in which problems are sorted out with a well-placed, caring comment or an empathetic smile, while we are bombarded with sociological facts about families. I find this offensive, given that it is conducted under the auspices

of trying to get us all to put more money into the wallets of BT bosses. Anyway, judging by some of the abrupt treatment I've had from directory enquiries, the privilege which, after all, we are now paying for, maybe they should be concentrating on their staff for a kick-off.

The Dutch army is the total antithesis of the image most of us have of our average close-cropped, pin-smart automaton, who obeys orders to the letter and never questions a decision. Some time ago the soldiers' union won Dutch soldiers the right to long hair, and my brother, who lives in Germany, tells me that they often sit and have a meeting about important decisions with the odd joint being passed round.

Ooh, I do love a party political broadcast. The other night I watched the Tory broadcast that has a bit of an attempt at an Orwellian 1984 style, in which talking heads are seen, depressed, face to camera, bemoaning the fact that Labour has ruined everything one, two and three years hence. One character has lost her job, another is unable to pay his mortgage and a third is disappointed because of a rise in tax rates. The Labour Party could have just taken this broadcast and rooted it firmly in the present, and they'd have had a perfect portrayal of what the Tories are doing to the country at the moment. Well, they've had a few other ideas from them; why not this one?

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obituaries / gazette



Hermlin: 'marble outside, plaster inside'

Stephan Hermlin

The opportunity – the necessity even – to reassess a country's entire literature is as rare as it is disorienting. Such an opportunity arose when the German Democratic Republic ceased to exist. Its literature survived, but Western critics began to question its value – had they overvalued individual voices simply because it was good to hear them above the slogans? Few writers were spared such scrutiny, but Stephan Hermlin was.

More urgent questions, involving more than the imperiousness of literary judgement, came to be asked when Stasi (State Security) files were opened, unmasking writers great and small as collaborators. Again Hermlin was spared – this time by the literary establishment, friend of the ideological President of the Writers' Union, Hermann Kant, friend too of the country's leader, Erich Honecker, was not working with the Stasi, he was indeed being watched by them.

Yet here the puzzles begin – and the controversies. When the East German writer Joachim Walther was preparing his recently published giant documentation of writers and the Stasi, Hermlin was one of a tiny handful of writers, out of 140, who denied him access to their own files. Why he refused and what, if anything, he was hiding, has not been explained. In the last 12 months, Hermlin has been at the centre of an exceptional, highly personal controversy. Karl Corino, a redoubtable journalist-cum-leader, indefatigably hunting out Stasi connections discovered almost by accident that Hermlin had tampered with the facts of his own life, and to such an extent that Corino produced a book with the loaded title, *Aussen Meinot Innen Gips. Die Legenden des Stephan Hermlin* ("Marble Outside, Plaster Inside: The Legends of Stephan Hermlin", 1996). Here too there were no clear answers – Hermlin did not respond in detail to the charge that he altered facts in order to profile himself as a brave anti-Fascist. Again the controversy has not cleared the air. On the contrary, it has added one more enigma to an already enigmatic figure.

And yet, much is unambiguous, not least Hermlin's lifelong commitment to socialism. He was one of those early-Brecht and Eisler were others – whose return to East Berlin (he arrived in 1947) significantly influenced the cultural politics and the cultural life of the new state. He had been born Rudolf Leder, of cultivated middle-class Jewish parents, in Chemnitz in 1915. He spent the years from 1936 to 1945 on the move in Spain, England, Palestine, France and Switzerland. His move to East Germany was more than a matter of ideology. He returned in many essays and interviews to the question of *Heimat* (hitherland) and to his own powerfully emotional conviction that the GDR was his only conceivable home.

Rootedness, a seeking-after-continuity, lay at the heart of Hermlin's poetry. His first published volume, *Zwölf Balladen von den grossen Städten* ("Twelve Ballads on the Cities"), appeared in Zurich in 1945 and other volumes of poetry followed during the 1950s. The themes were urgently topical, the forms were, however, traditional (ode, ballad, sonnet), the imagery often classical. It was a strategy bound to find favour with the framers of East German cultural policy for whom the classical heritage crucially underpinned the building of a socialist state. But Hermlin recognised the risk that a classicising style might become mannered and contrived – he himself wrote very little poetry after 1960. His own politics and his awareness of the dilemmas of war found more direct expression in prose stories – *Die Zeit der Gemeinsamkeit* ("Time of Community", 1949), *Der Leutnant Yorck von Wartenburg* ("Lieutenant Yorck of Wartenburg", 1954) – while at a later date poet and prose writer seem to converge in his most popular story, *Abendlicht* (Evening Light, 1979), one of Corino's principal targets, in which fact and fiction, reality and dream, politics and Romantic gesture, combine in a story that shifts between autobiography – a young man growing up in the 1930s and 1940s – and the narrative of a distant, anonymous observer.

Hermlin steered a devious course. He could toe the Party line and yet his essays often have the personal, undeclassified ring of a man immensely well-read in world literature speaking up for literary values that contravened but go beyond politics. By 1969, he was judged dangerous by the Stasi, yet in 1972 he sent an internal memorandum to Honecker, at the latter's request, in which he attacked the blacklisting of authors. He advised and encouraged young poets in private and through public readings of their work, and he was instrumental in rallying support for a protest when the singer-poet Wolf Biermann was refused re-entry into the GDR in 1976 (later – tactics again perhaps – he tried to underplay his role). To Hermann Kant he was, it was reported, both "almost a trauma" and yet an irreplaceable figure on the East German scene.

Ultimately Hermlin paid for facing in too many directions, trying to be an old revolutionary while keeping pace with a changing scene. He sought a public role and yet remained secretive. At the beginning of *Evening Light*, he almost supplies his own epitaph: "Where one asks, others will know no answer, and where answers are given, questions will be waiting."

Philip Brady

Rudolf Leder (Stephan Hermlin), writer, born Chemnitz, Germany 13 April 1915; married four times; died Berlin 6 April 1997.

Ellen Pollock

No actress ever flew the flag for Bernard Shaw with more panache than Ellen Pollock. As actress, director and drama teacher, her dedication to the great Irishman was unrivalled. President of the Shaw Society since 1949, Pollock is believed to have played, in a career spanning 72 years, more Shavian heroines than anyone else. She directed London seasons of his plays; and it was during the London premiere of one of his lesser-known works – *Far Fetch'd Fables* (Watergate, 1950) – that she announced Shaw's death from the stage.

Her dedication to acting began by watching Sarah Bernhardt. Young Ellen was seven. After that, she knew that she herself would be an actress. Not that she had any training or encouragement. "Everybody said I was much too tall for the stage," she recalled a few years ago, "and much too plain. Why don't you marry that nice Dr So-and-So?" her three sisters would ask.

Breaking into the stage profession wasn't easy either. "There were no agents. Each day you would tell up and down the stairs of the leading West End producers. When I came home for lunch, my mother would say, 'Have you been offered lots of jobs, dear?'"

Undaunted, she landed a part, aged 17, as a page in *Romeo and Juliet* at the Everyman, Hampstead. A few weeks

later she shared the stage with Ellen Terry as Herod's son in an Old English Nativity play. After a walk-on part in the West End, young Pollock spent the early 1920s touring. What fired her taste for Shaw was the Charles Macdonald Players. From 1920 the Dublin-born Macdonalds had been sending out companies on tour from London. The Macdonald Players stuck exclusively to a repertoire of Shaw, roaming Britain, Ireland, Europe, South Africa and the Far East with his plays. Pollock was nonetheless a highly versatile player in farce, tragedy, thriller, musical comedy, Shakespeare, Sophocles, Sheridan, Wilde, Dumas, Grand Guignol...

After West End runs in *Hit the Deck* (London Hippodrome, 1927) and Priestley's *The Good Companions* (Her Majesty's, 1931), came tours and the Malvern Festival, where Shaw loomed large. There, at the premiere of his so-called political extravaganza *Too True to Be Good* (1932) the critic James Agate recognised Pollock's talent as a comedienne who "contributed to amuse in a thin field of humour, and long after the crop had been gathered".

Of the same play, which she revived in a season at the Lyric, Hammersmith, under her own direction in 1944, Beverley Baxter declared: "Miss Pollock is gloriously vulgar and cheerful as the chambermaid masquerading as a countess."

In the intervening 12 years parts ranged from Aloysia Brolikins in Shaw's *On the Rocks* (Winter Garden, 1930) and *Green Gables* in the long-running *The Dominant Sex* (Shaftesbury, 1935) to Lady Snerwell in *The New School for Scandal* (Emmabasy, 1937) and Audrey in *As You Like It* (Open Air, 1938).

It was during the run of *The Dominant Sex* that the spirited young actress made a public name for herself as a jolly motorist, plying between Rochester and the West End in a yellow and orange touring, in which she was caught speeding, and contrived to talk (or smile) her way out of it, allegedly promising the magistrate tickets for the play.

For her Shavian season as director at Hammersmith 12 years later, Shaw sent a message through her to the audience: if they did not understand the play they were to sit through the piece again. At Hammersmith Pollock also played Candida, Z in *Village Wooing* and Eliza in *Pygmalion*. Then she exercised a bent for Grand Guignol at the Grandville, William Green – short, arresting, blood-and-thunder plays at which spectators were expected to faint.

Five years later, at the small Irving Theatre off Leicester Square, they did. Pollock joined the young director-to-be-critic Kenneth Tynan for his last stage production. The programme included an abridged version of *Titus Andronicus*. St John Ambulance men were conspicuously on duty and most evenings a couple of people duly fainted, including, one night, an ambulance.

Among Pollock's other West End productions were the thriller *The Third Visitor* (Duke of York's, 1949) with which she toured Germany; *Shavings* (St Martin's, 1951), three one-acters by Shaw in which she played Queen Elizabeth in *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*, *The Man of Destiny* and *Village Wooing*; and *Storks Don't Talk* (Comedy).

Joining Donald Wolfit's Shakespeareans for a season at the King's, Hammersmith in 1953 brought out the tragedienne in her – Judith in *The Wandering Jew*, *Jocasta in Oedipus*, and *Regan in King Lear*, as well as Audrey in *As You Like It*, Maria in *Twelfth Night*, Mistress Quickly in *Henry IV* and Mrs Candour in *The School for Scandal*.

For Shaw's centenary in 1956 she directed and played the title role in *Mrs Warren's Profession* (Royal Court), and in 1960 staged *Billy Bunter's Swiss Roll* at the Victoria Palace, a marriageless derivation of Frank Richards' Greyfriars School series. In the 1960s and 1970s she acted in the West End in *Pirandello's Six Characters in Search of an Author* (Mayfair, 1963), staged Coward's *Fallen Angels* at Malvern, and Shaw's *Pygmalion* at Detroit; played Madame Claude in *Mugh-*

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Pollock in front of her own portrait, painted by her husband, James Proudfoot, 1948

Photograph: Hulton Getty

am's *Lady Frederick* (Vaudeville and Duke of York's, 1970) and Mrs Higgins in *Pygmalion* (Albany, 1974). For the National Theatre Company in 1977 she staged her own production of *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*.

Whenever she sensed the need, she would appear at Ayot St Lawrence in Hertfordshire,

the shrine to Shaw, to unravel a plaque or give a reading or otherwise pay tribute to the author whom she had first met in 1932 at Malvern.

Pollock was also a notable teacher of drama at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts and at the Webber Douglas School of Acting. Late in her stage career she appeared in television plays and series including *The Forsyte Saga*, in which she played Forsyte's mother-in-law, Film credits, which had begun in 1927 with *Moulin Rouge*, included *Piccadilly* (1929), *The Informer* (1935), *The Gallipoli Major* (1951), and *Too Many Crooks* (1958). In 1965 Ellen

Pollock joined her sister in an antiques business in Chelsea.

Adam Benedict

Ellen Clara Pollock, actress; born Heidelberg, Germany 29 June 1903; married 1929 Captain Leslie Hancock (one son; died 1944), 1945 James Proudfoot (died 1971); died 29 March 1997.

Jean Charlot

Jean Charlot was an elegant writer, an electoral analyst of stature, a political commentator and the most eminent of the researchers on the French Gaullist movement. His stature in all of these disparate fields is assured but he is known to different audiences for very different talents.

He was born in Guingamp and educated at the lycées there and in Valenciennes. Over a long career, he rose through the Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques and, after taking a doctorate, became a Professor at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques in Paris in

1978. He was a visiting Professor at the universities of Lausanne and Liège (where he was doctor *honoris causa*). He was Secretary General of the Association Française de Science Politique (1975-79) and on its board from that time.

Charlot was one of the first and most eloquent electoral commentators. France is continuously hatched in opinion polls and Charlot made it part of his business to explain these, and especially the trends which underlay them, to a wider public, both through his appearances on television and as a columnist (regularly for *Le*

Poin, but also for *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde*). In a country where there are many more academic television personalities than in Britain, he was an IFOP (Institut Français d'Opinion Publique) "pollster" and a populariser in the best sense of the term.

Within the French intellectual élite, which notoriously lent to the left, Charlot was an exception: a committed Gaullist and an associate of Gaullist leaders but at the same time a careful analyst. In this capacity he was a pollster on call to the neo-Gaullist Rassemblement pour la République (RPR) movement set up in 1976 by Jacques Chirac

and delivered a number of private studies of public opinion to the RPR. Politically activist, propagandist, or polemical academic, he was also no novelty in France, but Charlot was from a different stamp: a passionate Gaullist but a dispassionate observer, an engaged but objective commentator. There was no mistaking Charlot's reasoned and sympathetic style, which took political matter and reduced it to a seamless and understandable flow of explanation without "talking down".

Charlot's works on Gaullism and the Gaullist movement are standards. Yet his broad range

of academic work also covered the analysis of opinion polls, the conceptual understanding of political parties and a widely admired basic text. His work on the Gaullist movement included his *L'Union pour la Nouvelle République* (1967), the famous *Le Phénomène Gaulliste* (1970), translated into English as *The Gaullist Phenomenon*, 1971, and many other languages) and *Le Gaullisme d'opposition* 1946-58 (1983). He contributed to the understanding of *de Gaulle* with the technical *Les Français et de Gaulle* (1971) and he edited *Quand la gauche peut gagner* (1973) both based on polling

work by IFOP. He also wrote the important *Les Partis Politiques* (1971) and the overview *Le Politique en France* (1984). In addition to his journalistic output, Charlot was a prolific contributor to many compilations and technical journals and will be remembered in that domain as an innovative researcher within the French discipline of western (and French) "political science" after the Second World War.

Charlot was a kindly and modest man with absolutely no "side". Although one of the most distinguished academics of his generation, he was generous to the newer entrants into the

profession and contributed his time unflinchingly. His determination to get to a Northern university one year, in the middle of a February freeze-up which stopped all public transport, to contribute to an Institut de Gaulle Colloquium, was way beyond the call of duty.

Charlot's last book, *Pourquoi Jacques Chirac?* (1995), dissecting the 1995 presidential race, showed him at his best. In this he combined insider access and sympathy for the new president with over 30 years of work on the Gaullist movement and his pleasure at seeing a Gaullist once again in the

Elysée was understandable. His discussions (in very good English) of the last two presidential campaigns will be remembered by contemporary students and academics. He was a devoted family man and he was a frequent visitor to England (his wife Monica ran the Maison Française in Oxford in the 1980s).

D.S. Bell

Jean Charlot, political scientist; born Guingamp, Côtes-du-Nord 16 March 1932; Professor Paris Institut d'Etudes Politiques 1978-97; married 1956 Monica Huber (three daughters); died 6 March 1997.

Births, Marriages & Deaths

BIRTHS

McGEORGE: Congratulations to Andy and Hazel for the birth of their beautiful baby, Lucy, on Tuesday 2 April.

DEATHS

ATTYKEN: Sir Robert Stevenson, on 10 April 1997, aged 95, husband of the late Margaret, father of Mariette, Peter and Eleanor. Formerly Vice-Chancellor of the Universities of Otago (New Zealand) and Birmingham. Funeral service at W.H. Sons & Son, Funeral Directors, 0121-558 5801. No flowers, please.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, In Memoriam) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5UL, telephoned on 0171-293 2811 (24-hour answering machine 0171-293 2812) or faxed to 0171-293 2810, and are charged at \$5.50 a line (VAT extra).

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Duke of Edinburgh tomorrow attends the opening ceremony of the Harrier Trade Fair and the Opening of the British Pavilion, Hannover.

Changing of the Guard
TODAY: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am. 34 Battalion The Royal Regiment of Wales mounts the Queen's Guard, at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am. Band provided by the Welsh Guards. TOMORROW: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am.

Forthcoming marriages

Mr P.E. Dickson and Miss R. B. Foster
The engagement is announced between Peter, son of the late Mr John Henry Foster, of Llanelli, and Miss Sheila O'Brien, of the Isle of Mull, and Ruth, daughter of Mr Henry Foster and the late Miss Rosemary Foster, of Campbell Town, Tasmania.

Birthdays

TODAY: Mr Alan Aychbourn, playwright, 58; Mr Raymond Barre, economist and politician, 73; Mr Ian Butler, former chairman, Cookson Group, 72; Miss Monserat Caballé, operatic singer, 64; Mr David Cassidy, singer, 48; Mr Brian Connell, writer and broadcaster, 81; Miss Elspet Gray (Lady Rix), actress, 68; Mr Lionel Hampton, bandleader, 84; The Right Rev John Hughes, former Bishop of Croydon, 69; Mr Uwe Kitzinger, former President, Temple College, Oxford, 69; The Earl of Limerick, chairman, Pirelli UK, 67; Mr Alfred Mabbis, architect, 76; Mr Bryan Magee, writer, 67; Mr Marshall Sir Harold Maguire, 85; Miss Ann Miller, actress and singer, 74; Mrs Wendy Savage, obstetrician and gynaecologist, 62; Dr Kennedy Simmonds, Prime Minister, St Kitts-Nevis, 61.

TOMORROW: Air Vice-Marshal Sir Bernard Chacksfield, 84; Mr Frank Chamberlain, former chairman, Test and County Cricket Board, 72; The Hon Alan Clark, former government minister, 69; The Right Rev Roderic Coote, former Bishop of Colchester, 82; Mr Liam Cosgrave, former leader of the Fine Gael party in Eire, 77; Lord Davidson, a Senator of the College of Justice in Scotland, 68; Mr Peter Donohoe, actor, 46; Mr Stanley Donen, film di-

rector and producer, 73; Mr Edward Fox, actor, 60; Professor Albert Halsey, sociologist, 74; Sir Jeremiah Harman, High Court judge, 67; Air Marshal Sir Kenneth Hirst, former Deputy Chief of Defence Staff, Ministry of Defence, 62; Mr Scamuse Heaney, poet, 58; Sir Peter Hepp, former ambassador to Brazil, 62; Mr Gary Kasparov, chess player, 34; Mr Howard Keel, singer and actor, 78; Mr Jojo O'Neill, racehorse trainer, 45; Dame Margaret Price, operatic singer, 56; Sir Stephen Roberts, former chairman, Milk Marketing Board, 83; Mr Christopher Struik, actor, 51; Lord Wedderburn of Charlton, Professor Emeritus of Commercial Law, London School of Economics, 70; Miss Eudora Welby, novelist, 88; Sir John Weston, ambassador and UK Permanent Representative to Nato, 59; Li-Gon Sir James Wilson, former chief executive, Tobacco Advisory Council, 76.

Anniversaries

TODAY: Births: Edmund Andran, composer, 1840; Bobby Moore, footballer, 1941. Deaths: Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 32nd US president, 1945; Josephine Baker, singer, 1975; Joe Louis (Joseph Louis Barrow), heavyweight boxer, 1981. On this day the Union Jack (Union Flag) was first adopted in England, 1606; the *Tader* was first published, 1709; the first manned space flight was made, by the cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, 1961. Today is the Feast Day of St Alferius, St Julius I, pope, St Sabas the Goth and Others and St Zeno of Verona.

TOMORROW: Births: Thomas Jefferson, 1743; Frank Winfield Woodworth, chairman, USMC, 1852; Marshall of the RAF Sir Arthur Harris, wartime chief of Bomber Command, 1892; John Gerard Braine, novelist, 1922. Deaths: Jean de La Fontaine, poet and writer of fables, 1695; James

Buchanan Brady ("Diamond Jim"), financier, 1917. On this day the Royal Military Academy was established at Woolwich, 1741; the Catholic Emancipation Act was passed in Britain, 1829. Today is the Feast Day of Saints Agathos, Campos, and Pappas, St Gualicho, St Hermenegild, St Martin I, pope and St Maritus or Mars. Today is also the beginning of the 50th New Year (*Sankranti Mela*).

Lectures

TODAY: National Gallery: Lynda Stephens, "Credity and Kindness" (St. Pietro da Cortona, *Saint Cecilia*), 12pm. Victoria and Albert Museum: Tracy Braham, "The Various Use of Relics in the Middle Ages", 2.30pm. Tate Gallery: Laurence Bradbury, "Hogarth's Aesthetic Aims", 1pm. British Museum: Rowena Lawrence, "Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture", 1.15pm.

National Portrait Gallery: Lisa Vaughan-Hughes, "Of Poems and Paintings: the ear and the eye lie down together", 3pm.

TOMORROW

Tate Gallery: Laurence Bradbury, "The Personal Touch in Palaeography", 2.30pm. National Portrait Gallery: Frances Homan, "French Influences on British Art and Architecture" 1660-1714", 3pm.

Durham University

Former students of the University of Durham (including King's, Army-school and Teacher Training Colleges) should have received the Spring edition (No 5) of *Durham First*, the University of Durham magazine. Anyone who has not done so is invited to contact the Development Office, Old Shire Hall, Durham DH1 1HF, for despatch of a copy (or telephone 0191-374 4682).

Bishop and boffin crack the curate's egg

You remember the old *Punch* cartoon: Bishop: "I'm afraid you've got a bad egg, Mr Jones!" Terrified curate: "Oh no, my Lord. I assure you, parts of it are excellent!"

Church reports on social issues are so often rubbishised by the press that it seems curious to join in, which is why this ageing Methodist curate has got used to claiming that they are "good in parts". But on Tuesday the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland published their report on *Unemployment and the Future of Work* and it is rather a good egg.

The working group includes serious entrepreneurs as well as advocates of rights for the poor. At the centre of the enterprise was a remarkable partnership between David Sheppard, Bishop of Liverpool, and Andrew Britton, who left the National Institute for Economic and Social Research to head the work – the Bishop and the Boffin.

It was certainly the Bishop's passion and persistence that created the thing. But Andrew Britton has made this a remarkably coherent and professionally competent report. Its case is simple. The argument is complex.

The case is this. The Churches claim that comfortable Britain has left the poor behind, most of all in the area of work. There are less than two million people claiming unemployment benefit, but that number doubles when those who have dropped out of the labour market altogether are counted. Worse, politicians who hope to govern have to reassure those who are still comfortable. A new commandment have they given unto us – Thou Shalt Not Frighten The Floating Voter. So the Churches have stepped into a moral void

faith & reason

The Church has not yet fully come to grips with the reality of the market – but its report on unemployment shows it is moving in the right direction, argues the Rev John Kennedy.

which political necessity has created. The Churches' report calls for a massive increase in satisfying, dignified work. It will not settle for a simple statistical decline in unemployment, which consigns millions to a sweatshop economy. They want "good work for everyone".

Many of the report's recommendations have been dismissed as clapped-out corporatism. And yes, it does want a public programme to eliminate long term unemployment, the recognition of trades unions, a national minimum wage, voluntary restraint on top salaries, and higher taxes if necessary. Yet the report argues cogently from a basis of orthodox market economics for these claims – but emphasising that the market will continue to fail the poor, and that poverty cannot be addressed without more public money.

But the most vital section of the report, which has received scant attention in the press to date, argues over 20 pages for job creation in the private sector. It is sharply critical of European reliance on the pub-

lic sector, and the heavy non-wage costs which destroy jobs. It insists that successful job creation depends on "the courage and hope in the future shown in the action of large numbers of individuals and managers. The economy will flourish only if these qualities are nurtured and supported by public opinion and public policy."

This is new. It signals that the Churches have abandoned that self-righteous, complacent anti-Thatcherism which paralysed thought. This document is different. It is much bolder in asserting the virtues of the competitive market. The report's careful, technical argument shows how the market, the state and the people can work together to create more jobs, and more dignified work.

Even so it does not go far enough. It is still more at home in the poverty lobby and the community project. Yet most Christians live in the world of business, making money and creating jobs. The report has little feel of what it's like to meet a payroll or get a product to market. Nobody quite asks the question "Please, Bishop, where do jobs come from?" in case the answer should sound too smug.

The Churches are right to demand that the next government should create a more inclusive society – but at last they are doing so in language that is both moral and realistic. Not before time. Over the past decade our society has shown itself prepared to sacrifice the weakest on the altar of the market. The Churches are at last replying effectively, not least with this shrewd assessment of the virtues and vices of the modern economy, and its capacity to create good work.

Faith & Reason is edited by Paul Valley

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business & city

Business news desk: tel 0171-293 2636 fax 0171-293 2098
BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

Board clearout continues at WH Smith

Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

WH Smith, the high street retailer that is seeking to revitalise its core chain, took its boardroom shake-up a step further yesterday. It announced that the head of the main WH Smith division was to leave with immediate effect.

Peter Bamford, who has only served on the main board for 18 months, becomes the ninth WH Smith director to leave the group since its profits warning two years ago. The total compensation bill for the departures will now exceed £1m.

However, Bill Cockburn, who took over as the group's chief executive in January 1996, denied that it represented a "bloodbath". He said: "It is time for a change and Peter and I were agreed on that. He has had a particularly tempestuous year. It is the first year of our strategic review and the next three are about implementation and consolidation. It needs someone fresh to come in."

Analysts said Mr Bamford's departure was because he was too closely associated with the decline in performance of the main chain which culminated in the profits warning in May 1995. The main WH Smith business

has been hit by competition from supermarkets on key product areas such as newspapers and magazines, books, music and videos. However, Mr Cockburn said Mr Bamford's departure was "amicable".

Institutional investors supported the move. One shareholder said: "We think Bill Cockburn has a difficult job and it is going to be a long slog to get the main business right. But there needed to be a fresh overhaul of the management and we would be supportive of what has happened rather than discouraged by it. So far he [Mr Cockburn] is doing all the right things."

Mr Cockburn, who became group chief executive at the beginning of last year, will become chairman of WH Smith Retail while the company seeks a replacement for Mr Bamford. He said that he was keen to move closer to the main high street business, which has 400 stores, and that the search for a new managing director for the business was "well advanced".

Mr Bamford, 43, joined WH Smith in 1987 and has been running the main retail business for the last three years. He was only appointed to the main board in late 1995. He was paid £1.8m last year and employed on a

two-year rolling contract. He will receive compensation through the company's pension scheme.

Mr Bamford's exit is the latest in a series of boardroom departures from the retail group as it attempts to shrug off its reputation as a slumbering underachiever.

He follows the former chief executive, Sir Malcolm Field, who left last year and Peter Troughton, the former head of WH Smith Retail who left with £400,000 compensation. David Roberts, the former head of WH Smith Business Supplies was made redundant following the sale of the Niceday business last year. He received £205,000 in compensation.

Others who have left include Philip Smith, a member of the founding Smith family who was a non-executive director, and John Napier, the former finance director who retired at the age of 59 last year when Keith Hamill, the former finance director of the Forte group was brought in.

Two other non-executive directors have stepped down while Simon Burke, the former head of Virgin Our-Pace left last year to return to the Virgin empire.

WH Smith also announced



All change: Peter Bamford (top left), is leaving his post as head of WH Smith Retail as group chief executive Bill Cockburn (middle left) seeks to revitalise the chain. Sir Malcolm Field (bottom left) retired as chief executive last year

yesterday it is hiring off its retail concessions operation from the WH Smith retail division into a separate business. It will have its own managing director. It has 100 outlets in railway sta-



A&L's share deadline put back

John Wilcock

Alliance & Leicester bowed to public pressure yesterday and extended the deadline by four days for members to return forms allowing investors to choose to sell their shares immediately or keep them.

The building society's initial time limit for the return of share allocation forms ran out yesterday in order to keep to a tight schedule which sees their first shares being traded on 21 April. Yesterday the society admitted that many forms had reached members later than planned.

The 2.3 million forms posted last month gave members the option to sell their shares on the flotation date via an auction conducted by Cazenove. But thousands of members complained as the clock ran out this week that they had not received forms, had been unable to get through on A&L's flotation hotline or had been met with "busy" fax machines.

A&L responded yesterday by extending the time for forms to be returned until 15 April. It said it was "extending its opening hours for enquiries to 8am-6pm Mondays to Fridays, and the Flotation Information Office will continue to be open 9am-midday on Saturdays. The number of staff answering telephones and responding to mail has also been increased."

An A&L spokesman yesterday said that a "very encouraging" 92 per cent of the allocation forms had already been sent back by members.

The spokesman also pointed out that of the four big building societies demutualising this year, "we started the process last and are finishing it first".

Halifax, for instance, has 8.5 million potential shareholders and declared its intention to convert more than 18 months ago. It will be sending out its first share allocation forms in 10 days' time. Shares in Halifax start dealing in early June.

A&L blamed the delay in members receiving forms on a combination of "the Easter break and the high volume of similar mailings at the same time".

The society said that members who were never shareholders before were keen to find out what was involved, and that A&L had received "a number of questions about the flotations of the Halifax and Woolwich, as well as its own."

This year's crowded schedule for flotations has already caused the Post Office problems, which can only guarantee to deliver 98.8 per cent of mail posted.

Shares fall on fears of US inflation

David Osborne and Tom Stevenson

Shares fell on both sides of the Atlantic yesterday after stronger than expected economic figures in the US fanned fears that American interest rates are set to rise next month. The FTSE 100 index of leading shares closed 42.5 points lower at 4,207.7, dragged down by tumbling prices on the Nasdaq exchange which was off by some 21 points. The bond market, meanwhile, the yields continued to push upwards.

Behind the renewed anxiety were the wholesale price figures issued by the Labor Department. It said that the producer price index (PPI) for March fell

by 0.1 per cent, following even larger drops in February and January. This, on the face of it, was good news for investors.

Of more concern, however, was the secondary "core rate" figure that shows price movements with the volatile sectors of energy and food excluded. The "core rate" shot up an unexpected 0.4 per cent in March - the biggest jump in 14 months.

The news rekindled investors' fears of signs of a return of inflation to the US economy and the likely consequence that further interest rate increases will be ordered by the Federal Reserve. Two weeks ago the Fed raised a key short-term rate by a quarter point in an effort to rein in the economy. Its next rate-setting meeting is in May.

"The PPI core rate was much higher than expected," remarked Melanie Hardy of Bear Stearns in New York. The drop in the overall PPI figure was helped especially by the largest decline in US energy prices in six years.

The Commerce Department meanwhile said that retail sales in the US rose by only a modest 0.2 per cent in March. But it revised its February retail number from 0.8 to 1.5 per cent.

David Alger of Fred Alger Management in New York offered a dissenting view on interest rates. "It seems to me that the economy is now decelerating. I'm not sure that the Fed is going to raise rates in May and I think that the market is going to turn around and it's going to be just fine."

Brian Kinserly of Unterberg Harris, meanwhile, said that even if two more interest rate increases were in the pipeline, they had largely already been factored in by investors.



Sir David Barnes: not likely to let Zeneca go freely

Shares in Zeneca sent 35p higher on Roche bid rumours

Magnus Grimond

Shares in Zeneca, the UK's third-largest drugs group, jumped yesterday on renewed speculation that Roche of Switzerland was about to launch a bid worth up to £2.1bn. The shares, which ended 35p up at £18.51 after being as much as 45.5p higher at one stage, were further boosted by news that Zeneca had beaten off a US patent challenge mounted against its Novovax breast cancer drug, the group's fifth best-selling product.

The bid rumour, the latest in a long series, emerged in a report in a Swiss newspaper which suggested that an offer worth £2.1 to £2.2 a share would be launched by Roche early next week. Cash, a weekly financial

publication, claimed the two companies were in talks and the Basel-based Roche planned to sell off Zeneca's agrochemicals and specialty chemicals operations, keeping only the drugs business.

Neither company would comment yesterday. A representative for Roche said: "We've heard the rumours before and we didn't comment then and we are not commenting now."

The Swiss company has substantial cash resources and is thought to be interested in making acquisitions, but analysts played down the latest twist to what has become a long-running saga. James Dodwell, a pharmaceuticals watcher at Barclays de Zoete Wedd, said the two companies would fit together reasonably well. Roche had a lot

of hospital products, while Zeneca's portfolio was strong in drugs targeted at GPs. Zeneca also had a strong franchise in cancer treatments, which Roche lacked, he suggested.

But he said: "Zeneca won't go freely. They want to remain independent and have said they are going to achieve 15 per cent per annum earnings growth for the next five years." Even for Roche, the possible \$35bn price tag for the British group would be hard to digest, while the rating might be hard to justify.

The one piece of tangible good news yesterday for Zeneca, headed by chief executive Sir David Barnes, was that a US appeal court had upheld its patent rights over Novovax, still the most widely used treatment for breast cancer nearly quarter of a century after its launch. The appeal to the Federal court followed a challenge by Novopharm, a Canadian maker of generic drugs, which had been thrown out by a lower court in Maryland last April. Zeneca said the decision disposed of the proceedings instituted by Novopharm, which had wanted to produce a generic form of the drug.

The decision helps protect Zeneca's US patent until its expiry in 2002, although the company said it would continue patent infringement proceedings against two other companies, Mylan Pharmaceuticals and Pharmacia, which have submitted applications for generic forms of the drug with America's Food and Drug Administration.

Virgin keen to buy stake in Sun Air

Michael Harrison

Richard Branson's Virgin group is set to expand its airline interests by making a bid for the state-owned South African carrier Sun Air. Details of the offer, made in partnership with a group of local black business interests, are due to be released next week when the South African government announces the list of groups that have pre-qualified to bid.

About 10 bidders are thought to have expressed an interest in Sun Air, which was formerly the carrier for the independent homeland of Bophuthatse and operates domestic services with a fleet of about five aircraft.

A Virgin spokesman said that if its bid was successful it was likely to emerge with a stake of around 20 per cent. The investment would be in line with

a commitment Mr Branson gave last year to spend about £100m building up its business interests in South Africa. Earlier this year it bid unsuccessfully for the country's first commercial radio licence.

Virgin Atlantic, Mr Branson's airline, operates six flights a week from London to Johannesburg and has an interline agreement with Sun Air to fly its passengers on to Cape Town and Durban. "We are very keen to take a stake in Sun Air," the spokesman said.

The Virgin bid is being made with the Blacklance consortium of six black empowerment companies. Providing the consortium has pre-qualified it will submit a non-binding offer and then a final offer. The South African government is being advised on the sale by BOE NatWest.

String of big deals resurrects commercial property sector

Tom Stevenson
City Editor

The commercial property market's return to strength was confirmed yesterday by a clutch of deals, including a £59m purchase by Great Portland Estates, and a report that John Rithlat's British Land was planning the West End's biggest development in decades. Yesterday's announcements followed a raft of surveys showing improvements in letting activity and a return to the speculative development schemes that companies had shunned since the last property boom.

Great Portland's acquisition of Ilex, a privately owned property investor, brings the company's spending since February's 297m rights issue to £100m. Ilex's two main assets are long

leaseholds on the Bond Street premises Clarendon House, a 36,700 square foot development of retail and office space, and Bond Street House, a 29,500 square foot development.

But the strongest sign so far of improving confidence in the central London property market has been provided by British Land's John Rithlat, who has laid out plans for a 2 million square foot scheme at its Euston Centre site. Original plans for the development were for a scheme only half as large.

He launched the latest phase of the development this week, a building that has been half let to the First National Bank of Chicago, with a bullish assessment of its prospects. "If you look at the site then it is a very realistic proposal. It has the best transport links in London with

five underground stations within easy walking distance, excellent access to Heathrow Airport and it will soon have the Euro-tunnel link at St Pancras. I do not know of a better location in London."

His enthusiasm matches the optimism expressed recently by a wide range of property developers, including Hammerson, which has announced ambitious plans to redevelop the Bull Ring shopping centre in Birmingham, and Chelsfield, which is stepping up plans to develop the area around Paddington Basin.

British Land is also active in the City, where it owns the Broadgate office complex around Liverpool Street station and has submitted extensive plans to redevelop its long-term holding Plantation House on Fenchurch Street.

After years in the doldrums, the property sector has sprung to life again this year, with many developers from the last property boom returning to the market and big deals, such as the aborted takeover of MEPC by Hammerson, being mooted. For the first time in years, quoted property companies are trading at premiums to the underlying value of their assets.

Other smaller deals in the sector announced yesterday included the acquisition by Persimmon of 23 acres of building land near York for 45.5m, the sale by Edge Properties of a Darlington retail warehouse to Scottish Amicable for £3.45m and the purchase by McKay Securities of a portfolio of properties from General Accident for £8.6m.

STOCK MARKETS									
FTSE 100			Dow Jones			Nikkei			
4207.7	-42.5	-1.0%	8940.0	-100.0	-1.1%	15100.0	-100.0	-0.7%	-0.7%
4207.7	-42.5	-1.0%	8940.0	-100.0	-1.1%	15100.0	-100.0	-0.7%	-0.7%
4207.7	-42.5	-1.0%	8940.0	-100.0	-1.1%	15100.0	-100.0	-0.7%	-0.7%
4207.7	-42.5	-1.0%	8940.0	-100.0	-1.1%	15100.0	-100.0	-0.7%	-0.7%
4207.7	-42.5	-1.0%	8940.0	-100.0	-1.1%	15100.0	-100.0	-0.7%	-0.7%
4207.7	-42.5	-1.0%	8940.0	-100.0	-1.1%	15100.0	-100.0	-0.7%	-0.7%
4207.7	-42.5	-1.0%	8940.0	-100.0	-1.1%	15100.0	-100.0	-0.7%	-0.7%
4207.7	-42.5	-1.0%	8940.0	-100.0	-1.1%	15100.0	-100.0	-0.7%	-0.7%
4207.7	-42.5	-1.0%	8940.0	-100.0	-1.1%	15100.0	-100.0	-0.7%	-0.7%

INTEREST RATES									
Short sterling			UK medium gilt			US long bond			
5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%
5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%
5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%
5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%
5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%
5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%
5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%
5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%
5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%

CURRENCIES									
£/\$			£/DM			£/¥			
1.6241	+0.0026	1.6241	0.6157	-0.0003	0.6157	162.41	-0.0003	162.41	-0.0003
1.6241	+0.0026	1.6241	0.6157	-0.0003	0.6157	162.41	-0.0003	162.41	-0.0003
1.6241	+0.0026	1.6241	0.6157	-0.0003	0.6157	162.41	-0.0003	162.41	-0.0003
1.6241	+0.0026	1.6241	0.6157	-0.0003	0.6157	162.41	-0.0003	162.41	-0.0003
1.6241	+0.0026	1.6241	0.6157	-0.0003	0.6157	162.41	-0.0003	162.41	-0.0003
1.6241	+0.0026	1.6241	0.6157	-0.0003	0.6157	162.41	-0.0003	162.41	-0.0003
1.6241	+0.0026	1.6241	0.6157	-0.0003	0.6157	162.41	-0.0003	162.41	-0.0003
1.6241	+0.0026	1.6241	0.6157	-0.0003	0.6157	162.41	-0.0003	162.41	-0.0003
1.6241	+0.0026	1.6241	0.6157	-0.0003	0.6157	162.41	-0.0003	162.41	-0.0003

IN THE LONG WEEKEND									
Excessive pension charges - put them high in the next government's in-bay. Don't sell your building society windfalls straight away. How to bet on the election outcome. Self-assessment - how to win the quiz with no prizes. Are mutual insurers the next bonanza? Tax cuts and tax hikes - who got what. All in today's Long Weekend section. Pages 24-30. UNIT TRUST PRICES. Today's full listing appears in the Long Weekend, page 26.									

John Wilcock



The logistics of splitting the licence could easily be enough to make both bidders shy away. Already there are doubts about the commercial viability of digital terrestrial. Force the two together under one roof and the whole thing might founder.

British Digital Broadcasting is an alliance of Britain's most powerful broadcasters, and none of them seems interested in using dig-

DTN has bid for all permutations – one, two, and three – but EDB has bid for just

Does it really matter if Mr Murdoch secures this important new platform? Obviously it does but possibly not as much as people think — provided as robust a regulator as Don Cruickshank at Ofcom remains in place, that is. The main threat to Sky's monopoly of pay TV comes not from digital terrestrial but from cable, an increasingly

Incredible though Mr Regan's attempted piracy still seems, it has to be admitted that he is at least creating waves as well as some amusing high drama. Mr Regan is a 31-year-old wheeler dealer of both limited experience and success - so far. The object of his

ten-point plan for business news. Here is a self-constructed 1980s man meets grand old cloth cap tradition, brass plate tax avoidance against ethical investment, cost cutter and asset stripper par excellence against nineteenth century utopianism. It would have been hard to invent a better plot.

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

Ionica refused to reveal the identity of the cable company.

The row mirrors a simmering dispute between BT and the cable industry last year over allegations that BT was engaged in a "dirty tricks" campaign to spread damaging information about cable networks. Ofel-

launch a phone service using fixed radio access. Though the telephone works in the same way as a conventional fixed line, the signal is sent from an ariel on the side of a house to a base station a few kilometres

level last week and received assurances that they'd take the appropriate steps within their organisation," he added.

The row is all the more surprising given that Iomica has not targeted cable customers

ferring to concentrate on eroding BT's dominant market share. Though its marketing budget is small by BT standards, Ionica claims response to its television advertising campaign has been beyond expectations.

signed up more than 15,000 customers out of about 700,000 able to take on the service. The company, which aims to float on the stock market later this year, has also announced plans to take on 600 more staff.

IN BRIEF

Big cheese in dairy farming

The boards of Waterford and the farmer co-op that owns 67 per cent of the company's equity met yesterday to consider Avonmore's proposal. Shares in Waterford, which makes Premier brand milk, soared 20p, or 25 per cent, to 100p, valuing the company at £187m. Avonmore, which sells milk, cheese, soups, meat, fertilizer and animal feed, rose 7p, or 3 per cent, to 235p.

French inflation slowdown

A slowdown in French inflation in March was largely the result of sharp falls in fresh produce prices due to exceptionally warm weather, the finance ministry said. The consumer price index rose 0.1 per cent last month from February, and 1.1 per cent year-on-year. The consensus forecast among economists was a moodish rise of 0.3 per cent. Falling energy prices were another key factor for the weak data, the ministry said. Prices in the sector fell 0.7 per cent overall, and 1.2 per cent for oil products alone, despite a rise in the value of the dollar over the period.

Grand Met poised to sell Brossard

Sara Lee of the US is in talks to buy the Brossard bakery businesses in France and Italy from Grand Metropolitan for undisclosed terms. In France, Brossard has 14 companies, one position in both the amount and from taking and producing, selling under the brand name of Brossard, Gringore, Savane and Lesotire. Fides, which is Brossard's business in Italy, makes and sells cakes to retailers and manufacturers under co-packing agreements. Brossard's total sales last year amounted to \$150m (£92.3m). Grand Met said the disposals were part of the realignment of its food businesses in the UK and continental Europe.

Roger Trapp

The other side of the coin is increasing sales. And Mr Cross's method of achieving that is described in the title of his book *Revenue Management*, one of the first titles to come out under the Orion Business imprint on 17 May. As Mr Cross happily admits, the concept is not rocket science. "It's out there waiting for people to discover it. It's just heads-up entrepreneurship," he said.

"The key is to forecast demand," he said, pointing out that at Delta Airline, for example, there are 900,000 flights a year, and each has to be looked at a year ahead to predict what will be happening in terms of the competitive environment and other circumstances. The result is not just higher prices in the summer and at holiday periods, but several different fares on each flight.

Mr Cross insists this "antidote to downsizing" is applicable to any kind of business. But the key is to tell the customer or client what is going on. People don't necessarily want the cheapest price, they want options, he says.

City Analysts' View
Western Deutsche Morgan Grenfell
June 1991

Last weekend's meeting of European finance ministers and central bankers eased jitters that EMU may not take place in 1999, writes Chris Hughes.

The calming effect arose from unconfirmed reports that Theo Waigel, the German Finance Minister, had suggested Germany was taking a more relaxed line over the need for countries to meet the Maastricht-imposed criteria of reducing debt to less than 3 per cent of GDP. German employment figures released this week also showed the first fall in jobless recorded in a year.

In the past, Germany has insisted on strict application of the Maastricht criteria. But Edgar Meister, Bundesbank directorate member, said yesterday it was not certain Germany would meet the criteria.

Martin Brookes, international economist at Goldman Sachs, said: "The German government wants to enter EMU regardless of the 3 per cent criteria."

Michael Lewis, senior economist at Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, said if EMU failed to go ahead on time, the German mark would strengthen and hit German competitiveness.

Industrial Metals				London Metal Exchange			
	Storae	Cash	3 mths		Volume	LME Stocks	chg
Aluminium Hg	12315-445	5980-6815		86344	844383	up	2621
Aluminium Zr	1440-48	1070-78		1425	71840		150
Copper A	20440-47	20970-04		36995	16725	up	6402
Lead	840-40	640-40		1303	17055		100
Nickel	7310-20	7620-30		16481	43559	up	150
Tin	3070-80	5765-00		428	10333	up	300
Zinc	2230-30	2230-30		39447	445025	up	1402
Settlement Conversion: C/\$				SPW	Stock volume & change in tonnes		
exchange rates: 1/2514				122.82	as at Tue 8 April		

Precious Metals					Spot & 3m			
	3m	6m	12m					
per troy oz	£	£	£	\$/troy oz	\$/troy oz	\$/troy oz	\$/troy oz	
Gold	389.25	227.60	187.95	370	228	107.40	348.935	
Palladium	1050	96.00	87.00	190	107	41.90	81.91	
Platinum	4725	24.25	22.00	94	58	22.20	191.535	
Gold Bull	345.00	214.70	187.00	41	27	107.40	343.970	

Agricultural					CMS			
	1000	1000	1000		1000	1000	1000	
	\$/t	\$/t	\$/t		\$/t	\$/t	\$/t	
Cocoa		Coffee		Berley		Potatoes		
LF/E	\$/t	LF/E	\$/t	LF/E	\$/t	LF/E	\$/t	

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Villeneuve the smoothest over bumpy surface

Motor racing

DAVID TREMAYNE
reports from Buenos Aires

Jacques Villeneuve put aside his dislike of Argentina's Auto-dromo Oscar Gálvez, and gave himself a late birthday present by comprehensively outclassing his opposition yesterday. Earlier, Villeneuve's Williams-Renault partner, Heinz-Harald Frentzen, had shaken off a head cold and his much-publicised new boy at Williams blues, to set fastest time, but Villeneuve, who turned 26 on Wednesday, shaded him by almost a second and a half once he got his car working to his satisfaction. Later, as others also dalted in their cars, the German fell to an eventual seventh place.

This preliminary practice session highlighted the "Mickey Mouse" nature of the circuit, and despite resurfacing work carried out since last year's race, all of the drivers were still critical of its bumpy nature. Frentzen summarised the feelings of many when he said: "The bump at the back of the circuit is still so bad that I could hardly hang on to the wheel."

The track surface was also dusty from lack of use, but while that at least should change in time for official qualifying this afternoon, when more rubber is laid, there is nothing the drivers can do about the bumps but grin and bear them, and try to minimise their effect on their cars. Villeneuve achieved the best set-up on his car, while Rubens Barrichello brought joy to the Stewart-Ford camp with second fastest time ahead of Olivier

Panis's Prost-Mugen Honda, Gerhard Berger's Benetton-Renault, Michael Schumacher's Ferrari and Giancarlo Fisichella's Jordan-Peugeot.

Villeneuve's performance followed recent outspoken comments on the dearth of challenge in Formula One circuits. The Canadian, the winner of the Brazilian GP a fortnight ago, voiced the belief that safety levels and circuit changes, in the wake of the accidents at the San Marino GP at Imola in 1994 which took the lives of Ayrton Senna and Roland Ratzenberger, have stifled a driver's ability to capitalise on his courage as opposed to his car's inherent technical strengths. And here in Argentina his cause has been taken up by no less a figure than Bernie Ecclestone, the vice president of marketing of the FIA, who threw his hat

into the ring with a very direct comment.

"Villeneuve isn't saying that motor racing should be dangerous, he just says we want more challenging circuits. I agree with him 100 per cent," Ecclestone said. "Since the accident at Imola, I think the FIA panicked a little under pressure from the media and went a bit over the top with changes all over the place, which is completely wrong and unnecessary."

Ecclestone, who is also the president of Foca, the constructors' association, spoke against the FIA's plans to modify the cars again for the 1998 season, by making them narrower, and said: "If we had the regulations from five years ago,

the grid would be closer, because the have-nots would have caught up," he said. "Every time we change something, the guys with the money say, 'No problem, let's change' and the other guys are struggling. So I think you'll find after 1998 there will be no need, from a safety aspect, to do anything and I think you'll find the regulations will be fixed for a longer period."

Yesterday the Williams team announced that its sponsorship agreement with Rothmans will continue for the 1998 season. But Craig Pollock, Villeneuve's manager, absolutely denied the accompanying rumours that the joint World Championship leader has already re-signed for the British team. Such a move would indeed appear to be precipitate in a season in which Villeneuve



The world champion, Michael Schumacher, enjoys a quiet moment in Buenos Aires yesterday. Photograph: Empics

Bath seek revenge for humiliation

Rugby Union

CHRIS HEWITT

The last time Leicester went drinking in rugby's equivalent of the Last Chance Saloon — otherwise known as the Recreation Ground, Bath — they sent their hosts slithering under the table. Although the West Countrymen have struggled since taking that Pilkington Cup beating in February, the indications are that the outgoing champions have finally shaken off the hangover.

Bath's encouraging 25-25 draw at Walsley last weekend left them with a mathematical chance of retaining their title, but the holders' sums do not add up in reality. It is far more conceivable that they will open the door for the Londoners by calling "Time, gentlemen please" on Leicester's bold double bid this afternoon.

Bath's distinctly unfortunate September setback at Welford Road set the tone for their entire campaign. Add to that their cup humiliation — no other word even begins to encapsulate the scale of a defeat that cost John Hall, their director of rugby, his job — and they owe Leicester plenty.

The Tigers, patched up and smoothed over after a fraught week on the injury front, travel at something close to full strength. Stuart Potter and Will Greenwood are back in mid-field, Austin Healey's bad back has eased sufficiently for him to take his place at scrum-half and Dean Richards has recovered from a similar injury to start at No 8, with Eric Miller occupying the blind-side berth. They remain quite a side on paper, but the wear and tear leaves them vulnerable to a Bath out-fit motivated by revenge.

A Leicester defeat, coupled with a Walsley victory at the fast-fading title. If that scenario comes to pass, the title will effectively have been decided by a pair of injury-time tries, each followed by a nerveless conversion, scored in two wonderful matches earlier this week.

Alex King's equalising strike for Walsley against Bath last Sunday just about kept body and soul together for the long-time leaders and when Phil Greening's effort condemned Leicester to a gut-wrenching reverse at Gloucester on Tuesday, the Londoners took possession of their own destiny once again.

True, Walsley must negotiate a banana skin or two, but at least they will face two of their last three opponents, Sale and Northampton, on home territory. Lawrence Dallaglio's side

have advanced to this enviable position with a minimum of noise or hullabaloo but for all their shortcomings up front they have developed an iron spirit to match their stealth.

While some sort of clarity may emerge at the very top, the log jam for places in next season's Heineken Cup will only intensify after today's round of matches. Harlequins have no game, but Gloucester's late challenge continues at Sale.

Richard Trickey, the Sale president, declined to identify the unnamed backers who agreed to stump up £2.5m on Thursday, but he confirmed that a limited company had been formed to purchase the club's rugby arm. By coincidence, the Gloucester membership were meeting last night to consider a financial offer of similar magnitude.

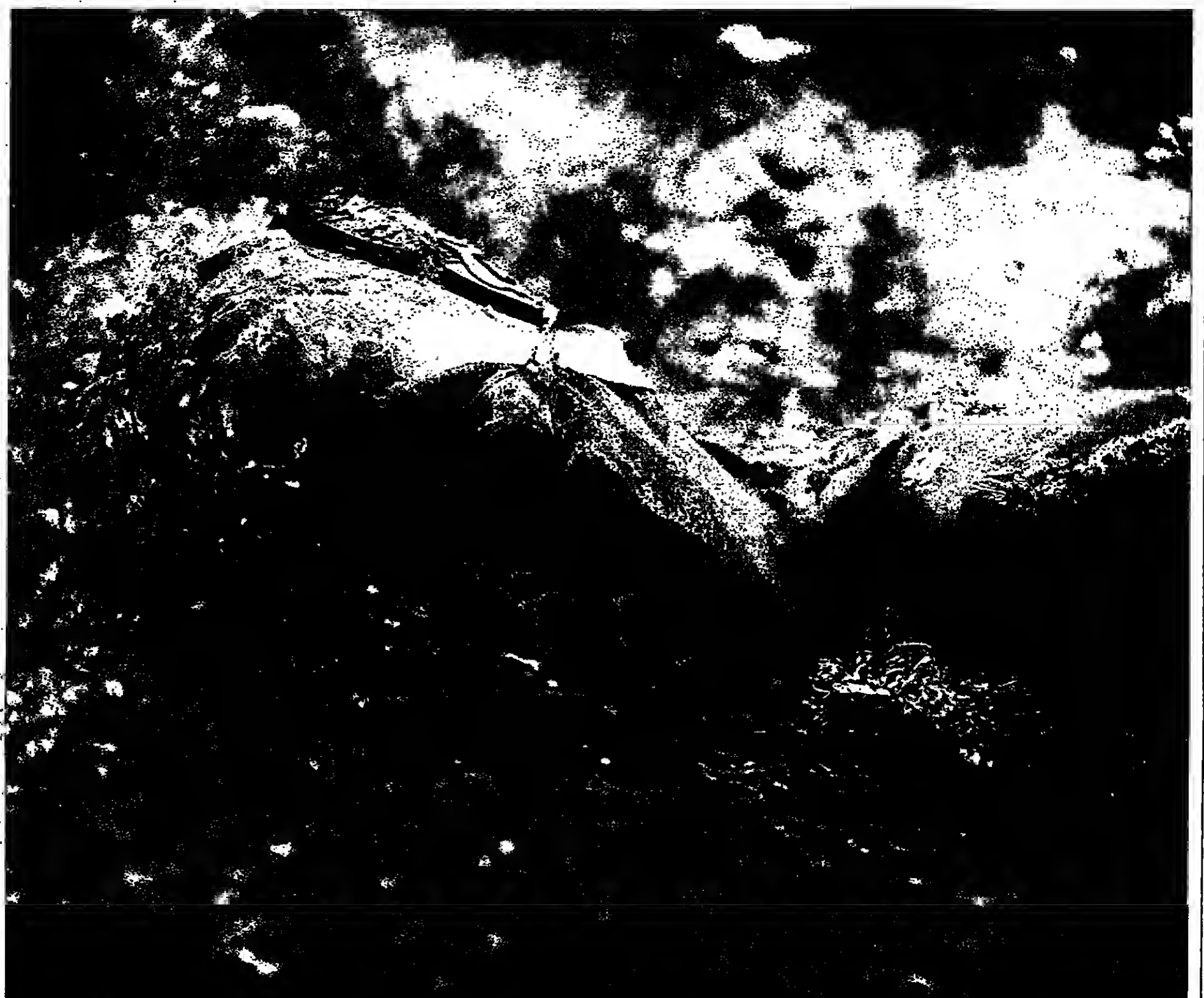
Llanelli would probably trade the lion's share of their precious heritage for such a cash injection. With the very future of their home at Stradey Park the subject of feverish debate, they will attempt to take their minds off an uncertain future by ensuring a glorious present in tomorrow's Swalec Cup semi-final with Cardiff at St Helen's.

With Jonathan Davies joining an already long list of Cardiff absentees — the first-choice back-row trio of Hemi Taylor, Emyr Lewis and Gwyn Jones were ruled out earlier this week, as was the Lions prop David Young — the Scarlets start as firm favourites for a seventh cup final appearance in 10 years. Lee Jarvis, the Wales under-21 cap, replaces Davies, who has a leg injury.

In today's semi-final Swansea face rank outsiders Ebbw Vale at Stradey. The All Whites have seen off the Rhondda side twice already this season and had plenty to spare on each occasion, but Garin Jenkins, the Swansea captain, professed legitimate concerns over possible complacency.

"It was a different story last November, when Vale fielded all their top players and beat us 13-9," said the international hooker. "With key performers like Kingsley Jones and Mark Jones back in the Vale side, we expect a challenge similar to the one we encountered last autumn."

Swansea welcome back Scott Gibbs in mid-field — the Lions centre has not played since trapping a nerve in his neck five weeks ago — but will again be without Arwel Thomas and Colin Charvis, two more current international first choices. The hardest season in club rugby history is taking its toll.



Breathtaking endeavour: Lyn McLaren competes in the heats of the women's 200 metres freestyle in the European Trials in Sheffield yesterday. Leeds' Claire Huddart, the British winter champion, aimed to repeat her December victory over Karen Pickering, the British record holder, in the final. Photograph: Robert Hallam

Young guns struggle to gain recognition

With the Grand National, the Coca-Cola Cup final, the London Marathon, the FA Cup semi, the Boat Race and numerous major events around the world, April is traditionally a hectic month on the sporting calendar. It is also the month the World League of American Football chooses to launch its 11-week season and wonders why it struggles to generate its fair share of publicity.

Not that certain sections of the national media could ever be accused of generosity towards Europe's six-team professional gridiron organisation. The suspension of the original league after two seasons in 1992 still rankles; the return in 1995 was greeted with a less than warm embrace.

Nick Halling on the new season of the World League of American Football

In the UK, the London Monarchs are dismissed as a failure because the average gates of 12,000 compare poorly with the 1991 throngs of 40,000. What is overlooked is that the Monarchs attract more support than most club rugby teams of both codes, while many of the capital's Nationwide League clubs would gladly settle for five-figure gates.

Yet, given the activity elsewhere this weekend, the Monarchs' season-opener against the Frankfurt Galaxy at Stamford Bridge tomorrow will not be high on the media's priority list. A similar fate awaits the

business plan through to the end of the century. As the NFL owns 50 per cent of the European operation in a joint partnership with the Fox television network, its endorsement is crucial to long-term stability.

"I am very excited about the 1997 season," the WLAFA president, Oliver Luck, said. "Not only will the standard of play be higher than ever, but we are going into the season with a solid foundation after a 1996 season that saw us make real progress."

For the first time, all 30 NFL teams have allocated partici-

pants to the World League, with 75 players spread across the six teams. The quarterback position looks particularly well served, with players of the calibre of Stan White of the New York Giants in London, Seattle's Jon Kitna in Barcelona and Chad May of Arizona with Frankfurt. All will hope to emulate the achievement of Brad Johnson, who used his experience with the Monarchs in 1995 to land a multi-million dollar contract as the Minnesota Vikings' starting quarterback.

"Most teams understand the value of the World League," Dan Reeves, head coach of the NFL's Atlanta Falcons, said. "This is a great opportunity for

Old Boys ready for Reading

Hockey

BILL COWILL

This afternoon's Hockey Association Cup quarter-final game at Chigwell will be a repeat of last season's Cup final in which Reading, after a 2-2 draw with Old Loughtonians, took the trophy after penalty strokes.

Several of the key players in that final will be missing. However, the competition is likely to be equally fierce, particularly in the light of Reading's National League championship success last weekend.

The Old Boys will be without two of their three Great Britain Olympic players and a third, Nick Thompson, just back after a groin injury, is likely to play for only part of the game. Julian

Halls is out following a recent operation on his wrist ligaments and Jason Lee is coaching and playing in Australia.

Reading are without the English international Howard Hoskin, who has been out of action since Christmas, and will also be missing the New Zealander Karl Sanders who, since his arrival at Christmas, has gone some way to filling the gap created by Hoskin. Sanders has a groin injury and is expected to be missing for three weeks.

Reading will also be hoping that their captain, Jon Wyatt, due back from America late last night, will not be suffering from jet lag.

The pick of tomorrow's remaining quarter-final ties is the visit of League runners-up, Teddington, to Cannock. Tedding-

ton expect to be at full strength. Cannock will again be without their Welsh international Ian Hughes-Rowlands.

In their two League encounters this season the teams have scored 16 goals between them with only one goal on each occasion separating them. It promises to be a high scoring contest. In the other two ties, Guildford should get the better of Sunbitoo and St Albans should go into the semi-final draw rather than Chelmsford.

Eastcote have been named the Nastro Azzurro club of the season for winning their first and second XI Regional Leagues in which both teams went through the season unbeaten. Additionally the Vets, holders of the HA Veterans' Trophy, have reached this year's final.

Novotna's blind spot

Tennis

Playing under floodlights clearly plays havoc with Jana Novotna's eyesight. On Thursday night it worked against the top seed as she tumbled out of the Bausch & Lomb Championships in Amelia Island, Florida, losing to the 12th-seeded South African, Amanda Coetzer, 6-2, 1-6, 6-1.

"I had a problem seeing the ball since I only play under the lights once or twice during the year," the Czech Republic's No 1 woman said. "I knew she was a tough player and has a good record against top players. I wasn't going for my first serves and was missing many over-heads and easy volleys."

Aranza Sanchez Vicario, the

No2 seed, and the fourth seeded Conchita Martinez both scored third-round victories on a chilly Florida afternoon to move into the quarter-finals.

Sanchez Vicario won 6-3, 1-6, 6-4 against the 16th seed, Ruxandra Dragomir of Romania. Sanchez Vicario has not won a trophy since May 1996 in Hamburg, Germany.

The sixth-ranked Martinez had a 6-3, 6-3 victory over Chanda Rubin, ranked 30th, in 65 minutes.

Steffi Graf's expected showdown with her successor as the world-ranked No 1, Martina Hingis, has been delayed by Graf's knee injury. Graf has pulled out of this month's tournament in Hamburg, where she could have faced Hingis, who is unbeaten this year.

Granby Halls boost for Riders

Basketball

RICHARD TAYLOR

The axe has been lifted from the Granby Halls, giving Leicester City Riders an extra boost to face the Budweiser League champions, the Leopards, in tonight's first game of their best-of-three play-off quarter-final series.

The Riders snatched eighth place in the league with their 96-94 victory over Birmingham Bulls a week ago, but believed tonight's visit of the Leopards would be their finale at Granby Halls, which have been marked for demolition since last year.

Instead, Leicester City Council are allowing the club to remain at the venue for next

season. The Riders will take responsibility for managing the basketball court, with the rest of the building sealed off.

The other quarter-finals pair, Newcastle Eagles (seventh) against league runners-up London Towers, Manchester Giants (sixth) against third-placed Sheffield Sharks, with Chester Jets (fifth) facing Birmingham (fourth). The four survivors play at Wembley Arena on 3 and 4 May.

The champions, Leopards, will be wary of their visit to Leicester, where the Riders coach, Bob Donewald, whips up intense support from the crowd, prowls the sidelines and berates the officials. He also has an explosive, if unpredictable, team.

The Leopards coach, Billy Mims, runs him close in play-

ing the hype factor to the maximum, and after commenting on the last two play-off finals wants to ensure he is not stranded in the TV gantry.

Mims said: "The play-off finals are the showcase of British basketball. You want the best four teams to be there and I think that includes us, so it's a matter of making sure we get there."

If Mims is feeling under pressure, Donewald is keen to add to it: "With the players they've got they should beat us by 15 or 20 points," he said. "These games shouldn't even be close."

Whatever, it will be the quickest series. The second leg is at London Arena tomorrow and the third game, if required, is in London on Tuesday.

Trainplot can retire with long-distance distinction

Racing

RICHARD EDMONDSON

Jimmy Fitzgerald has not had the best of seasons, but the rails of the winter months will be immediately erased if one result goes his way at Ascot today. Trainplot, who has been not so much a servant but an entire chain gang at the Norton Grange stables, retires this afternoon, and the Irish trainer says he will be happier than the men behind the Grand National winner if the old horse can go out successfully in the Letby & Christopher Long Distance Hurdle.

It has proved to be a bountiful month for Fitzgerald's local tissue man in Yorkshire. At the Cheltenham Festival, another of the yard's permanent

fixtures, Uncle Ernie, was allowed to stand down after collecting the Grand Annual Chase. His swollen scrapbook includes two wins on the flat for Lynda Ramsden, 14 wins from 49 efforts over hurdles and fences, and over £200,000 in prize-money.

Trainplot (3.10) will have generated even more earnings if he can dispose of four rivals this afternoon. The little horse (he possesses the size and scope not far removed from the best you see on wooden runners in an infant's nursery) gained the first of his notable wins in 1990, when he captured the Cesarewitch in the hands of another who has lost the arm-wrestle with *Donna*, Willie Carson. Trainplot also finished fourth in an Ascot Gold Cup and, like Uncle Ernie, stamped

his impression on National Hunt racing's greatest stage by winning last year's Coral Cup. Another animal with wrinkles, Storm Alert (next best 2.35), should capture the preceding race at Ascot. Bertone will finish second.

The obvious choice for the card's opener is Serious, who won despite blowing up on the run-in at Uttoxeter last time. However, it may be worth taking a chance with DANCING PADDY (map 2.00), who was unwilling to change his vaulting technique when switched to

fences from hurdles and who returns to the flier obstacles. Coming away from the races with anything other than spherical denominations in your pocket is difficult enough, but today offers the opportunity to get rid of funds even if you happen to be ahead at Ascot. A Partnership Parade between the fourth and fifth races, and again between the fifth and sixth, will give punters the chance to get involved in the most proficient money-gobbling device the good Lord ever sent among us, the racehorse. Prices range from £150 for membership of a racing club with an interest in several horses, up to £6,500 for a quarter share in a racing club at Kim Bailey's Upper Lambourn yard should the champagne-affected become involved this afternoon. In the Don Ferriero world



Chapple-Hyatt: Doubts

of the flat, Desert King attempts to notch the name of O'Brien once again on the scroll for the Gladness Stakes at the Curragh this afternoon. In the old days, it was as natural as pulling on his pants in the morning for Vincent to win this race and now his unruly namesake Aidan tries to continue the Ballydooley hegemony. Desert King was one of six horses supplemented for the Derby this week, alongside the likes of stablemate John Gifford and the champion British juvenile, Revolve. After the latter's forerunner, Robert Sangster, had forked out £8,000 to add his colt to the field, Peter Chapple-Hyatt, his trainer, piped up with the cheery news that he was unsure whether Revolve would stay the Derby distance.

"It's hard to say whether he'll get the trip," Chapple-Hyatt said yesterday. "I know he will stay a mile and a quarter but whether he will get a mile and a half nobody knows. He's got plenty of speed, but his sire, Fairy King, sired the Arc winner Hellsbore so he can get horses that stay."

Fantastic win for Britain

Criquette Head's Pas De Repose sailed through her 1,000 Guineas prep race, the Listed Prix Imprudence over seven furlongs at Maisons-Laffitte yesterday, while Clive Brittain's Fantastic Fellow took the colts' Classic trial, the Prix Diebel, for Newmarket.

Pas De Repose, the Chelvey Park Stakes winner, made all under Freddie Head and, although shaken up towards the end, there was only ever going to be one winner.

Criquette Head said: "We were very satisfied by the run and it should serve to dust off all the cobwebs prior to Newmarket. Pas De Repose does everything so easily at home that I told Freddie to make sure she had a good bit of work today."

Head has won the 1,000 Guineas three times before with Ma Biche, Ravinella and Hatooft and Pas De Repose was cut to 6-1, from 8-1, by Coral to give her trainer a fourth win in the race on 4 May.

Fantastic Fellow entered 2,000 Guineas reckoning, for which he is 20-1, from 33-1 with Ladbrokes, after making all the running in the Prix Diebel. The Brian Meachan-trained Tomba was fourth.

Brittain said: "Fantastic Fellow has done very well over the winter and it will now be a question of going back to the question of deciding the next move. He is entered in both the French 2,000 Guineas, and the English 2,000 Guineas."

KYLE STEWART HANDICAP CHASE (10 YEAR-OLD)

CUMULATIVE RANKING CHART - 10-YEAR RATE																																																																																																				
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Ascot - 2.00

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FA CUP SEMI-FINALS

Chesterfield set sail against tide of history



GUY HODGSON

Stan Ternent, Bury's manager, was undertaking an interview after a shower. "How we lost to Chesterfield is a mystery," he said in January, his disappointment as oiled as his body. "I'll show you the video. We played them off the park."

Strong, vigorous FA Cup runs of the 1950s have insubstantial roots. Middlesbrough were losing to non-League Hednesford at one stage this season while Chesterfield, if Ternent's testimony can be trusted, were fortunate to survive the third round. Subsequent success can erase a lot of earlier angst, shocks can obliterate a well of achievement.

Wimbledon, Chelsea and Middlesbrough have upset the real leviathans in English football this season but they will be wobbly overshadowed if Chesterfield reach the FA Cup final tomorrow and become the first team from either the old Third Division or the current Second to get there. Cup glory, apart from the very few, is an ephemeral thing.

Not that Chesterfield would know. Give or take the odd goalkeeper, renowned has bypassed them with depressing regularity considering that they are the fourth-oldest club in the League. They have never got to the top division and the furthest they had

			
WIMBLEDON			
SULLIVAN			
CUNNINGHAM	PERRY	BLACKWELL	KIMBLE
ARDLEY	JONES	EARLE	LEONHARDSEN
EKOKU		GAYLE	
M HUGHES		ZOLA	
MINTO	WISE	NEWTON	DI MATTEO
CLARKE	LEBOEUF	SINCLAIR	
GRODAS			
			
CHELSEA			
Kick-off 12.0 tomorrow on Highway			

Kick-off 22.0 tomorrow at Highbury

been in the FA Cup before was the fifth round in 1933, 1938 and 1950. It is not so much unusual territory that they will be exploring when they face Middlesbrough at Old Trafford tomorrow as another planet.

Nor does history favour them, as six Third Division teams have

reached the semi-finals before and none has reached Wembley. Add such exotic figures in the opposition as Juninho and Fabrizio Ravanelli to those statistics and a Chesterfield win tomorrow would be the greatest FA Cup shock of all time.

"Our Cup record is dismal," Sean

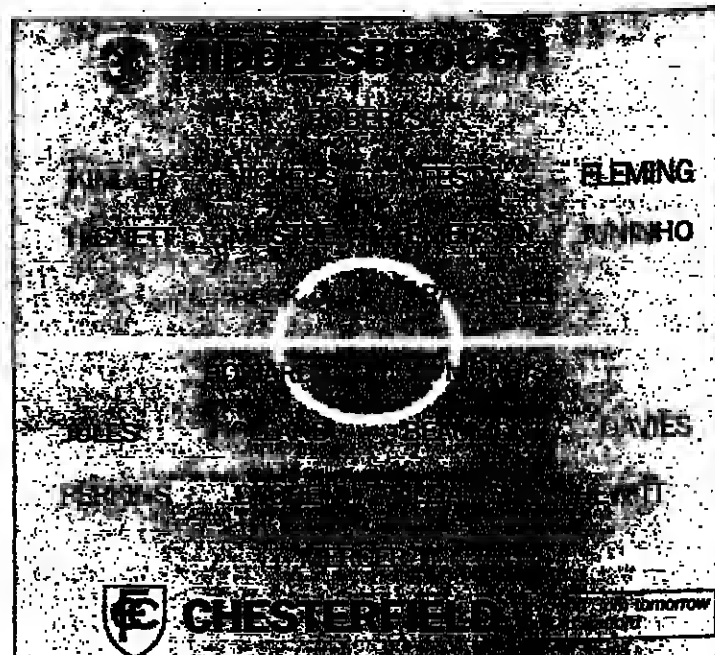
Dyche, the Chesterfield captain, agreed, "but we can make up for all those disappointments. The thing about the Cup is that it is only over 90 minutes. Just because you are playing a Premiership team it does not mean they are naturally going to win. The pressure is on them."

Certainly, it will be expected to nullify Juninho and Chesterfield could hardly have asked for a better template than Leicester's performance in the Coca-Cola Cup final last Sunday. Pontus Kaamark never left the Brazilian's shoulder and his impact was negligible.

Indeed the fear of failure might be as large a hindrance to Middlesbrough as their experience is an asset. Lose to Chesterfield and who knows what condition the players will be in when they meet Leicester in the Coca-Cola Cup final replay on Wednesday? This week will define Boro's season and it is never a comfortable prospect knowing so much is at stake.

Nigel Pearson, an influence of calm at the back, could soothe any sign of nerves but he is likely to be missing with an ankle injury. Compare that with Chesterfield who could afford to rest a good proportion of their team when they met Watford on Tuesday. If ever a club of their status is going to reach Wembley, tomorrow is the time.

Chelsea, who meet Wimbledon at



Highbury, were carrying the swagger of potential Cup winners when they defeated Liverpool with an extraordinary comeback in the fourth round. Yet their League form — three successive defeats — is dire and the ongoing sniping between the player-manager, Ruud Gullit, and

striker Gianluca Vialli can hardly have helped team bonding. Indeed, if a side looked to be splitting into two disparate and talented parts it was Chelsea when they integrated against Coventry in midweek. "We're going into the semi-final on a bad run," Steve Clarke, their defender,

said. "With the players we've got the performances have not been good enough."

Neither have Wimbledon's although their outward impression of relentless commitment could have been hiding mental recharging in time for tomorrow. Since Leicester knocked them out of the Coca-Cola Cup a match before Wembley their performances in the Premiership have lacked something and their last win was on 23 February.

That was at Highbury and if Wimbledon could choose a place to play the semi-final, Arsenal's home would probably be it as they have not lost in the League there since their FA Cup-winning season of 1988. Pertinently, their one meeting this season with tomorrow's opponents ended in a 4-2 win at Stamford Bridge.

Much will depend on how successful Wimbledon are at harnessing Gianfranco Zola. Suppress him and they will be half-way to Wembley, let him free and the season of much promise will come to nothing.

In the year of the underdog the natural outcome tomorrow would be a Chesterfield-Wimbledon final. Logic dictates otherwise, however, although both semi-finals seem ripe for replays. How the Premier League will sort out the consequent fixture chaos without extending the season is anyone's guess.

'If you play with so many good players, you either become intimidated or you try to be as good. I'm 33 and still improving'

Football lore has it that this weekend, FA Cup semi-final time, is the game's heart-break ridge. Get over it and at least you get to play at Wembley; lose and nobody cheers, nobody remembers your name.

An expert disagrees. When it comes to losing semi-finals, few footballers speak with greater authority than Steve Clarke, the Chelsea defender. Against Wimbledon at Highbury tomorrow Clarke will be playing in his 10th semi-final. So far he has won one. He has lost in the FA Cup, the Scottish Cup, the League Cup both sides of the border, and in Europe.

But all those bitter memories — and some of St Mirren's defeats against the Old Firm were controversial — pale beside the recollection of the one final he got to. It was 1994 and Chelsea lost 4-0 to Manchester United, the biggest FA Cup final defeat, discounting replays, since 1903.

"That was the worst," Clarke said over lunch after training earlier this week. "We felt that it was not a fair reflection of the game. We had done as well as them for an hour, it just ran away from us in the last half-hour. It even rained, on Cup final day. That summed up our mood."

The game was marked by two penalties against Chelsea in seven minutes, the second, which put United two up, was not one of David Elleray's better decisions. "That was the turning point of the game," Clarke added. "At half-time we had a chance of winning. That was a penalty which went against us."

This contrasts with Chelsea's last-minute penalty in this year's fifth-round replay against Leicester. "I was right in line and when it happened I thought it was a penalty — as you do. The first time I saw it on the television I thought perhaps not. Sometimes they go for you, sometimes against."

Chelsea have also beaten West Bromwich, Liverpool and Portsmouth. Clarke's words in the programme before the third-round tie with Albion have looked increasingly prophetic. "It seems if we get through the third round we normally have a good Cup run," he wrote.

Now Wimbledon await. "They have had a great season and turned us over big time at Stamford Bridge [4-2]. We know what to expect. We have to fight to the best of our ability and if we can do, we are good enough to go through."

"Efan Ekoku and Marcus Gayle have been outstanding. I don't think there has been a better partnership in the Premiership. They are both big, strong and quick. They are a handful to play against and get their share of goals. You can't ask any more of your front men."

Both sides have lost form recently, with Chelsea's slump prompting Clarke to tell his team-mates a few home truths after the midweek defeat at Coventry. Clarke, the club captain, was frustrated at the recent under-achievement of a potentially fine side.

"The team is now better equipped than in 1994. We had good players then but we have improved the quality of the team, we have good international experience. It is the best team I have played in at Chelsea."

There have been a few to choose from since Clarke signed from St Mirren in 1986-1987

Chelsea's club captain talks to Glenn Moore about a decade of change at the Bridge

(typically the Paisley club won the Scottish Cup later that season). Not only is he the club's longest-serving player — none of the squad he began with are even in the Premiership.

"There have been six managers and about 600 players. There is always a high turnover at a football club though not normally so many managers," Clarke said.

"There was a time when I thought about moving on. It was under Bobby Campbell and I was out in the side. The club didn't let me go and I'm still here. I never really wanted to leave. I always enjoyed it here and now I'm in a team which makes the struggles of the early years worthwhile. It is a reward for perseverance."

The turnaround in the last four years has been incredible. When Glenn Hoddle came the club seemed to move on to a different level. Although I have not actually moved it feels as though I have joined another club.

'I've always enjoyed it here, and now I'm in a team which makes the struggles of the early years worthwhile'

"The ground will be great when it is finished. I remember when the chairman first spoke about the plans and put the stadium model in reception. I thought, 'I won't see that in my time here', but I'm getting there. I've another two years on my contract so there's every chance I'll play at the Bridge when it's completed."

Changes off the pitch have been matched on it. Clarke has survived and prospered through Chelsea's adoption of a Continental style of play and he has had an excellent season on the left of Chelsea's back three.

"I'm enjoying it. The change started under Glenn, he wanted us to start to get the ball down and knock it about. It progressed under Ruud Gullit. The Continental players won't tolerate it if you give the ball away. It makes you concentrate. If you play with good players you either become intimidated or say 'I want to be as good, I want to learn'. I chose the latter. I am 33 and still improving."

Clarke was a conventional right-back when Hoddle came. "He changed it to the wing-back system with me on the right and I was not as comfortable. I felt I had more to offer as a defender than an attacker. Plus I'm getting on — once you get the wrong side of 30 you don't want to be doing 80-yard runs all the time and there is a lot of physical effort involved."

"Then Glenn signed Dan Petrescu and a lot of people thought 'that's Clarke out'. Glenn pulled me aside and said, 'this is not the end of your career, I want you to play on the right-hand side of a back three'. But I was injured at the time and Michael Duberry came in and did great. Suddenly I was thinking, 'I'm not going to get in there either'."

"Then Andy Myers got injured on the left, I got the chance and took it. Being right-footed makes it easier to cover the centre but I did go out against the kicking board and ping away with the left foot for a while just to get it swinging right."

"I thought his strength was his defeeding," Hoddle recalled this week. "I also wanted to have full-backs in those positions so they would be comfortable if they were pulled wide. He has done very well. He was receptive to new ideas."

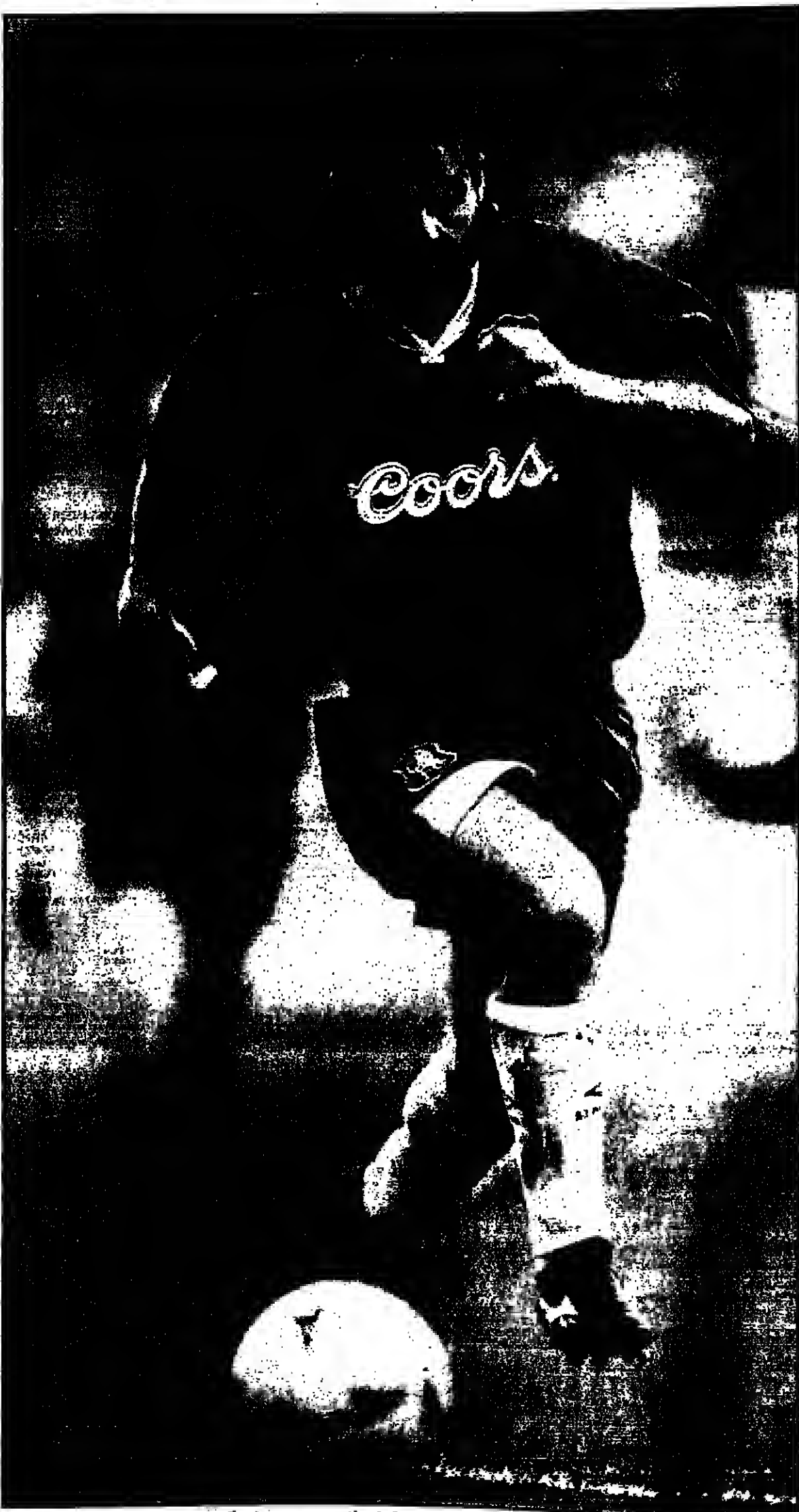
If Clarke's development is a good argument for the introduction of foreign players, so was the scene at Chelsea's Heathrow training ground. After Gullit ended the official session, Gianluca Vialli went off to do some sprint training with Ade Mafe (the former British athlete who is now Chelsea's fitness coach), Dan Petrescu did some dribbling and Gianfranco Zola practised volleying with Frode Grodås. Clarke led a few players on a jog round the perimeter.

"You see these players come over here and they earn a lot of money and are top quality players, but they don't just train and go home. They are prepared to stay, do a little bit extra and work on something in their game. The Italians believe if you are not training you lose your conditioning. We tend to play so many matches we just have a rest then get ready for the next one. They are still prepared to do the conditioning work. That was an eye-opener."

"When I started playing, the manager just said 'that's it, get changed and go home'. It wasn't open for debate. This morning Ruud said you're finished and it was 30 to 40 minutes before a lot of the players came in. Of course, it was a nice day, but if it's raining you'll still find 12 to 15 people doing their exercises in the gym."

Clarke's form might prompt thoughts of a Scotland recall but, though he has been watched this season by Craig Brown, he has given up hopes of adding to his six caps. The last, against the Netherlands, in 1993, also marked the end of Gullit's international career. "He chose to retire. I was retired," Clarke said. "I don't think there is any chance of a recall. You never say never but there is a reason for him to change it. They have lost two goals in 15 internationals. I'm not bitter about it. It just happens. The problem is scoring goals not conceding them and he won't be calling me up for my goalscoring."

Indeed not. Clarke, having been narrowly robbed of a goal against Portsmouth by Dennis Wise, last scored against Queen's Park Rangers in April 1992. "For a long time I didn't go up for corners so I was not likely to score. This year I have, and I've had four or five good attempts. With a little bit of luck they could have been a goal. I haven't given up. I might not get another international cap but I'm pretty sure I'll get another goal."



Steve Clarke: Has had an excellent season on the left of Chelsea's back three

Photograph: Allsport

Last Sunday Middlesbrough fans watched the history of our club being rewritten as the team walked on to the Wembley pitch for the first time in a major final. Amazingly, we'll do it again at Old Trafford tomorrow as Boro play their first FA Cup semi-final.

In 1975, a handful of Boro fans met together on the steps of the players' entrance at Arsenal to form Middlesbrough Supporters South. All fully rounded in the history of a century of mediocrity, if you had suggested to them that the next 22 years would feature three defeats in the FA Cup quarter-

finals, two setbacks in League Cup semi-finals, four relegations including a season back in Division Three, and losing the lead with three minutes to go in the only real cup final we ever reached in 121 years, they would all have responded: "bloody typical", which still stands today as the unofficial motto of MSS.

If you had then gone on to say that you predicted that Boro would also go bankrupt, then reach the top division within two years they may have started to inch away from you. But when you told them that Boro would leave Ayresome

park for a stunning new all-seater stadium, buy an England striker, an Italian international who had just scored the winning goal in the European Cup final and a Brazilian star who Pele described as the best player in the world, they would have called for the straitjackets.

For many of the 650 members in MSS now, all this sudden attention across the sports pages of the world's media is difficult to come to terms with. Only a couple of years ago, being a Boro exile 250 miles from home meant scouring the press and Ceefax for any scraps of Boro news. Snippets like "John

No 213 Middlesbrough FAN'S EYE VIEW Andy Smith

Gannon has signed on a free transfer" or "Gary Parkinson has passed a late fitness test for the Zenith Data Systems Cup tie with Fort Vale" would have us snatching away with excitement, proudly sporting our Heritage Hampers sponsored shirts and squinting at snuggled copies of the *Evening Gazette* to

see how the reserves got on at Doncaster.

Now a quick scan in the paper shop means a blast of tabloid headlines announcing "Juninho to Atletico/Valencia", "Points docked as Boro go bottom", "Ravanelli to Man Utd/back to Italy", "Emmerson's in Rio", "Robbie

Mustoe in sprained ankle shock". And that's just *Gazzetta Dello Sport*.

There were over 200 of us pre-Robson and the newcomers have joined after hearing of us through people like the actor Steve Tompkinson of *Drop the Dead Donkey* and *Ballykissangel* fame, who warmed Boro hearts when he insisted his character, Father Peter Clifford, chased a group of kids clad in Man Utd and Liverpool shirts with the words: "Hey, remember, Middlesbrough rule OK."

Critics taunt us that there were only 4,000 at Hartlepool to watch Boro's first home

game of the 1986/87 season or that in Lennie Lawrence's twilight months only 8,000 turned up at Ayresome to watch them play Bolton in 1993.

You won't find the tens of thousands who have recently queued for cup tickets claiming to have been there. They were sat at home cursing their luck at having the Boro heritage passed on to them by generations who have always been let down by a club who, in the words of our own Harry Pearson, "had displayed a capacity for self-destruction that would have drawn gasps of admiration from a roomful of kamikaze pilots."

When the Boro have looked anything like breaking out of the mediocrity the support has been huge, only to be broken by pitiful defeats in crucial cup ties or, in the case of two of the greatest sides, in 1913 and 1939, war being declared.

We may have no finger-nails, cash or nerves left by 17 May but we would rather have all this than sit in mid-table boredom. Alan Hansen may not understand that, but who cares?

Boro exiles can contact MSS at 3 Garland Court, Victoria Street, St Albans, Herts AL1 2SY

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Case for the defence

Chelsea's Steve Clarke talks to Glenn Moore about his FA Cup semi-final hopes, page 30

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Running man

Paul Evans tells Mike Rowbottom about his London Marathon challenge, page 26

In Monday's 28-page sports supplement

THE FA CUP SEMI-FINALS

Glenn Moore and Phil Shaw report on who will make it to Wembley

THE MASTERS

Andy Farrell and Robert Green report on the final round in Augusta

THE ARGENTINIAN GRAND PRIX

David Tremayne on the latest round of the Formula One championship

THE LONDON MARATHON

Mike Rowbottom on the event which brings together amateurs and professionals

THE MONTY INTERVIEW

At home with the top racehorse trainer Martin Pipe

Bladon races to join ranks of green men

Golf

ANDY FARRELL reports from Augusta

Grateful that Augusta National was playing at less than its most fearsome, as it did on Thursday, Warren Bladon took advantage with a second-round 72. At seven over, the continuing presence of the British Amateur champion in the 61st US Masters was in the hands of the cut. Similarly, his switch to the professional ranks, when the unemployed Midlander can start paying off the £7,000 it has cost to bring six of his family and friends out here, was either going to come today or on Monday.

Bladon, when he had a birdie on the second on Thursday, was briefly the leading European but he came home in 42 for a 79. Yesterday, with the greens slightly slower and the pins not tucked away on ski-jump like slopes, Bladon decided to take

whatever came his way. "I thought I needed a couple under today to make the cut, but I wanted to take it easy and not chase the birdies as I did yesterday," Bladon, who was in line for low amateur honours, said.

"I am pleased with a level-par round. Before you come here you worry that you are going to make a fool of yourself, but I saw Greg Norman yesterday have a three-foot par-putt, and then a 35-footer for bogey, so it happens to everyone. I would love to play the course again, but I have had a great week and played with some nice people. It beats working for a living."

Bladon, who walked off the course after nine holes of practice with Jack Nicklaus because he was tired, played with Arnold Palmer on Thursday and Raymond Floyd yesterday. Palmer improved from 89 to 87 and his aggregate of 176, or 32 over par, was his worst Augusta performance by 16 strokes.

By the time the four-times winner got to the 18th, the scoreboards were not displaying his score.

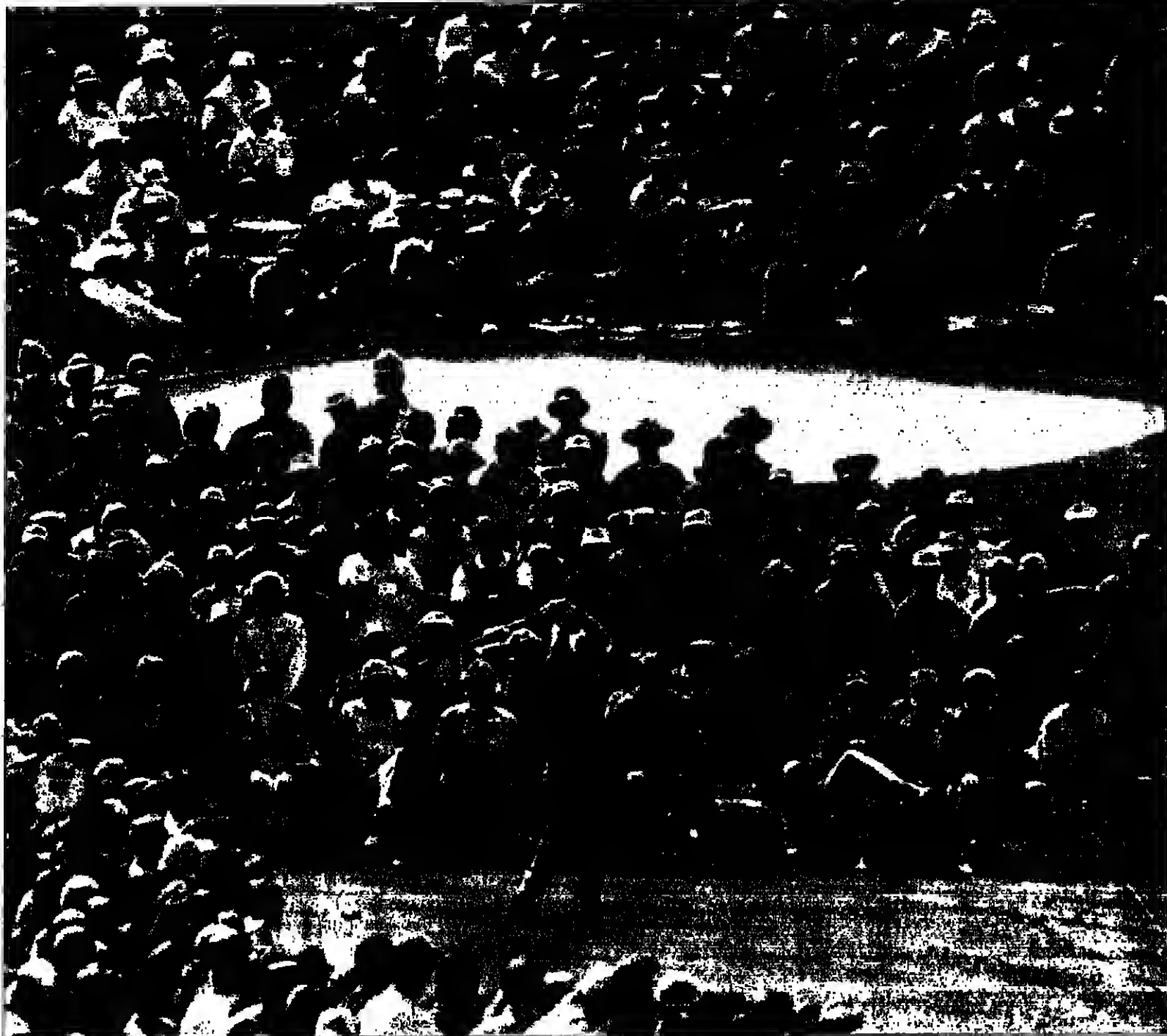
Palmer, 67, underwent surgery for prostate cancer earlier in the year and the only figures that interest him were from the tests he took last week which came back clear. "I didn't want to make a big deal out of playing here, because others have been through what I have been through, but if I can be an inspiration to others, that's fine," Palmer said.

Albeit with one proviso: Palmer defended the way the course was set up on a bizarre opening day. The first round scoring average was 76.09, the highest since 1988 and the fifth highest since 1960. "The course played as it used to 40 years ago," Palmer said.

"The ball always used to bounce on the greens. In recent years, players have got used to soft greens where the ball stops. The only difference is that the speed of the greens did not used to be as fast. Is it playable? There's a young man who shot 30 for the back nine so, yes, it's playable."

When Tiger Woods went to the turn in 40, he seemed to be struggling like everyone else. There was no sign he was about to return his first sub-par round in seven outings around the National. Then, he tightened up his swing and made his playing partner, the three-times champion Nick Faldo, look merely mortal with his 75. Woods was only one shot outside Mark Calcavecchia's back-nine record of 29.

Faldo, like the vast majority of the field, never came to terms with the greens. Woods, meanwhile, did not look like he was facing "potential disaster on every shot and every putt," as



Nowhere to hide: Jack Nicklaus drives off the third tee during the second round at Augusta yesterday

Photograph: Stephen Munday/Allsport

FIRST-ROUND SCORES	
1-18	1-18
19-36	19-36
37-54	37-54
55-72	55-72
73-90	73-90
91-108	91-108
109-126	109-126
127-144	127-144
145-162	145-162
163-180	163-180
181-198	181-198
199-216	199-216
217-234	217-234
235-252	235-252
253-270	253-270
271-288	271-288
289-306	289-306
307-324	307-324
325-342	325-342
343-360	343-360
361-378	361-378
379-396	379-396
397-414	397-414
415-432	415-432
433-450	433-450
451-468	451-468
469-486	469-486
487-504	487-504
505-522	505-522
523-540	523-540
541-558	541-558
559-576	559-576
577-594	577-594
595-612	595-612
613-630	613-630
631-648	631-648
649-666	649-666
667-684	667-684
685-702	685-702
703-720	703-720
721-738	721-738
739-756	739-756
757-774	757-774
775-792	775-792
793-810	793-810
811-828	811-828
829-846	829-846
847-864	847-864
865-882	865-882
883-900	883-900
901-918	901-918
919-936	919-936
937-954	937-954
955-972	955-972
973-990	973-990
991-1008	991-1008

Colin Montgomerie had said after his 72. Woods proved that it is still possible to overpower the course, as Jack Nicklaus used to do in the 60s and 70s. Faldo's precision is still important, but so much easier to achieve when you are hitting a pitching wedge into the par-five 15th and a half wedge into the 17th. Woods's drive at the 15th was 352 yards and meant

he could hit a full wedge shot from a flat lie. His approach stopped four feet from the hole and he sunk that for an eagle. The tournament started at the 10th, where the 21-year-old holed from 15 feet. At the short 12th, he chipped in from behind the green and the par-five 13th was a two-putt birdie. With the 12-foot birdie putt at the 17th, Woods found himself fourth be-

hind John Huston, Paul Stankowski and Paul Azinger. Despite Woods's dramatics, he did not take the headline in yesterday's *Augusta Chronicle*. "Huston, the eagle has landed," the paper reported. With one of the last blows of the day, Huston, from almost on the 10th fairway after his drive hit a tree, holed his five-iron shot at the 18th from 190 yards. It was only

the fourth two at the closing hole in Masters history. "There was quite an adrenaline rush," Huston, all of whose three US Tour wins have come in Florida, said. "Then there was the relief of not having to putt." It was not his only piece of fortune in his five-under 67. At the 15th, he sliced his drive but it hit a buggy and rebounded on to the fairway. Then his second shot,

which pitched on top of the bank at the front of the green, stopped its inevitable descent into the water at the bottom of the slope, right on the hazard line. US MASTERS (Augusta): Early second-round scores (US unless stated): 155 S Ballesteros (69), 74, 150 R Almeray (69), 71, 150 C Coody (63), 77, 150 S Jones (67), 75, 150 C Coody (63), 77, 150 R Green (67), 74, 150 L Roberts (67), 150 G Brown (64), 79, 150 R 62, 63, 170 A Palmer (69), 67, 170 D Ford (65), 64. * denotes amate. Ballesteros lost in time, page 26

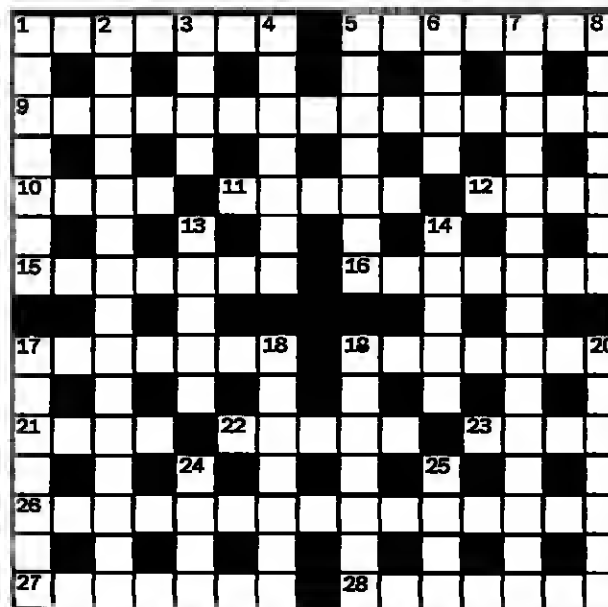
THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3271, Saturday 12 April

By Phil

ACROSS

DOWN



- 1 British sailor was wounded and talked incoherently (7)
- 5 Keyboard instrument in case, one found beside church (7)
- 9 Old lawman - something crooked operator's found around the highway (3,6,6)
- 10 and 11 Queen, perhaps, comes backround ring road and Motorway to see city official (4,5)
- 12 Dressing in nothing reflected a hint of tenacity (4)
- 15 Uncomplaining person mother kept in a bit after party (7)
- 16 Clean beggar? (7)
- 17 Posing with one Devil, mostly devilish (7)
- 19 Drunken sot, wanting to get in the warm, is in a difficult situation (3,4)
- 21 Nobody in ancient Rome recalled the sign (4)
- 22 and 23 Bad temper about book with clout from fundamentalist area (5,4)
- 26 Pooh-pooh a suggestion for putting out a fire? (4,4,5,2)
- 27 Mistaken legal appellation in legal document (7)
- 28 Flunk mother's broken (7)

- 1 Untidy slob, lying in, it seems? It's downhill all the way for one! (7)
- 2 A beef now erupted: nonsense involving article warning about cattle (6,2,3,4)
- 3 Stringed instrument that's capped one of the winds (4)
- 4 Finish with players set in mould (3-4)
- 5 Like much fruit-juice, cold (it's to stimulate, mostly) (7)
- 6 and 14 Talkative person, uncomfortable bright, married unfashionable head of Humanities (4,5)
- 7 Distributed glam greetings in - this? (7,8)
- 8 Machine supplying bubbles taking a long time to run (7)
- 9 and 24 Body chemical's help in swallowing a form of manioc (5-4)
- 14 See 6 down
- 17 Learner of squad, beaten, gave up (7)
- 18 Cold young person accepting the French (7)
- 19 A foolish person, Henry's able to embrace women (4-3)
- 20 Disease from time tucking into drink provided by students (7)
- 24 See 13 down
- 25 A quantity of dusty earth - it's an affront to the eye (4)

The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive hardbacked copies of the new Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 4018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5BL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: S Moore, Ipswich; B Large, Eps; M Jepson, Sheffield; E O'Riordan, Dublin; L Poole, Stevenage.

Friday's solution

BOOTHBANK FLOP
LUBER P L A
ARRIVAL CRYBABY
O B E I R I U P
EQUILIBRIUM ABASH
L C V I M C
SHEAR ELEVATION
UN C I T I R A T E
C I T I R A T E R E U S
S R L O R U S
ENNUI TREMULOUS
S A N D O S G T
SHINE TOEALLY
O A S C A R T L
RIDE TOUGHSTONE

Last Saturday's solution

S F A C I N I L
S P U R C H I N E P O R
E I T I C N E U P
B I N E F I C E W A N D E R
O N O X E O
P R E O G E P O R T A B L E
I N E T O
M E D I T E R R A N E A N
T E I R G
S T E R I L I T Y S P R A M
E L N O A I
M A N G E L C O N S T A N T
T A O E I T O
D I A T A T I O N S A N E W
S E E G T N O

United investors may consider legal action over fixture pile-up

Football

ALAN NIXON

Manchester United's main investors could sue the Premier League for the fixture chaos that would cost the club at least £10m if they fail to win the championship because of it.

United have run out of options in their battle to extend the season and avoid a programme of four games in the final eight days of the season. United have to visit Leicester on 3 May before home games against Middlesbrough on 6 May, Newcastle on 8 May and West Ham on 11 May.

If United lose the League title, finishing third or worse, and fail to win this season's European Cup, they will be out of next season's Champions' League, in which potential profits are around £10m. That would affect their share price and thus the interests of major investment funds.

United are writing to the Football Association to appeal against the verdict, but they are not being given any encouragement. The football club itself cannot sue the FA, or Uefa, the governing body of European

football, could ban them from their competitions next season. However, any of their investors could do so and that fact may be an additional worry for the Premier League in a controversy that is clouding the end of the season.

Leeds United's manager, George Graham, is considering a £3m bid to sign Bolton's midfielder Alan Thompson. Thompson has been outstanding for Bolton in their runaway success in the First Division this season and he would bring some much needed fire to the Leeds side.

Bolton's manager, Colin Todd, has said Thompson is not for sale, but Graham is refusing to take no for an answer. He has been keen on Thompson since he was manager of Arsenal and the player was a prospect at Newcastle and with the England Under-21s.

English football is close to reaching agreement on a new transfer system to answer the challenge of the "Bosman" ruling. The FA met with the

Premier League, the Football League and Professional Footballers' Association this week to continue discussions on proposed changes.

Their talks have been given added urgency by the threat of Wimbledon's Vinnie Jones to challenge the current system in the courts if he is not allowed to leave Selhurst Park at the end of his contract.

That could throw the domestic game into the kind of chaos the Belgian footballer forced on cross-border moves with his successful challenge to the old Continental systems. Among the proposals being considered are free transfers for players over the age of 24 if and when they are out of contract.

"After consultations with clubs we anticipate reaching a common view on changes to the current system of financial compensation when a player changes clubs at the end of his contract," the FA chief executive, Graham Kelly, said yesterday. The League Managers' Association was present at the meeting as observers.

The impact of the Bosman ruling will also be discussed next Thursday by the Uefa executive committee meeting in Geneva, which will also rule on England and Germany's bids to stage the 2006 World Cup. "A definitive statement [on Bosman] may be issued from that meeting which will guide us when we have our next meeting in May," Kelly added.

Diego Maradona was in hospital again yesterday, days after being rushed to a clinic after falling ill on a Chilean television chat show. "It's not serious, it's just a check-up," an official at the exclusive Buenos Aires hospital said. She said Maradona had been admitted during the night but would give no further details.

Argentina's 1986 World Cup winning captain broke out in a cold sweat on a Chilean chat show on Monday night after dancing a tango with former Miss Universe Cecilia Bolocco. He was taken to hospital and diagnosed with high blood pressure. Maradona returned the next day to Buenos Aires, where local media reported he spent the night dancing at a night-club.

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IMAGE OF THE WEEK

Painters took to the River Cam on Thursday as the sunshine came streaming down. All over the country temperatures soared, reaching 22C (72F) in some areas. Photograph by Brian Harris using a Nikon F4 with a 180mm lens, 1000th of a second at f4 on Kodak 160 ASA film. To order a print of this picture - it costs £14 - phone 0171-293 2543



the long weekend

THE INDEPENDENT • SATURDAY 12 APRIL 1997

WORDS OF THE WEEK

'The discussion we hear so often in the public arena about crime emerges second-hand from the imagination of your average crime writer'

The Royal Festival Hall is staging a 'Crime and Punishment' festival today. Mike Phillips is one of three writers discussing the relationship between crime, crime-writing and society.

In Britain, crime fiction tends to be perceived as "mere entertainment", a sort of brain-washing exercise for the beach or the boring train journey. For that, you probably have to blame an atmosphere which I'd describe as philistine, an atmosphere which says that if you're going to discuss ideology, politics, aesthetics, and society seriously, it must come from the right quarters.

But, as it happens, crime fiction writers are also novelists, and novelists are part of the argument about how much you earn, where you can live, what kind of education your children get, whether or not you go to jail before you grow up. In some parts of the world, novelists are even imprisoned or killed for precisely that reason. So the idea that crime writers and crime narratives play a role in fixing our ideas about the nature of society won't come as any great surprise. After all, we don't have any problems with the idea that images of violence - the sight of people being shot or stabbed or disembowelled - may have some sort of effect on persons who are looking at such things. Oddly enough, there's no such debate about violent images in books - maybe there's a consensus that being able to read makes you sane and level-headed. But, of course, you don't need to read the stuff to be affected by the ideas and images that come packaged in books, because

nowadays they're swiftly repackaged and disseminated in films and TV and on the Internet. So it has to be true that the narratives outlined by crime fiction dictate a number of public and private responses, not only towards crime and punishment, but also towards our ideas about how society is structured, towards our ideas about the role and the functions of authority, and towards our ideas about the nation: what it is and who belongs in it. To fully appreciate this, all you have to do is read a few passages from any current best-seller or, better still, look at the nightly parade on TV, because it is the fantasies of crime writers that shape and largely determine TV narratives both in drama and, increasingly, in documentaries and the news. One example of how these different things have begun to come together is the way that the programmes about real crimes have, in style and form, become precise imitations of fictional narratives.

Examine the meanings behind this marriage of entertainment and polemic and you'll also uncover a sort of map of our basic attitudes about crime and punishment. If you listen to much of the political dialogue around the issue of crime, you'll hear a replay of the view that emerges from any reading of the popular narratives about crime: the old story of good against evil. Never mind the debates of criminologists, or the real experience of the criminal justice system, the discussion we hear so often in the public arena emerges second-hand or third- or fourth-hand from the imagination; the fears and the psychodramas of your aver-

age crime writer, which is, in a sense, entirely appropriate, because it's become a vicious circle where our audience has been trained to interpret crime in terms of simplistic morality, which politicians can then claim to be reflecting back at them.

This is an equation that makes a large number of contemporary crime writers uneasy. There's been a great deal of debate about the differing shades of realism in different forms, but the truth is that reality has nothing to do with it. It's hard to believe that we get very far with more graphic descriptions of murder or violence or more revolting pictures of one crime or the other. At one extreme, this becomes a species of pornography. Instead, contemporary crime writers seem to be pitched further and faster into the debate surrounding such matters as morality, discipline and all the rest of it. In a sense, this is a predictable movement away from tradition, where, in what's called the Golden Age of crime fiction, the job of the genre was to utter clear statements about the nature of the social order, about the boundaries of class, and about the dangers of breaching certain conventions of social behaviour.

The Prime Minister recently made a speech evoking the nature of Englishness, using the frequently quoted invocation "Warm beer, and cricket on the village green". The unspoken reference evokes a time when everyone knew their place, crime was isolated in the slum areas, and there were rituals, closed to outsiders, which outlined and confirmed a specific sort of identity. This is the costlier side of nostalgia for cross-

word merchants such as Agatha Christie, but in many ways it also outlines the central vision of the tradition, and within this outline you can discern the swelling paranoia of the embattled "moral majority", surrounded and threatened by an irresistible tide of alien evil.

For most contemporary writers in the genre, the way that we understand crime, law and order, the workings of the criminal justice system and the intervention of political reality with these things offers the opportunity to reassess and reinterpret the narratives of crime fiction. But there's a sense, I would argue, in which all serious writers face this task of re-interpretation.

For writers like myself, confronted by the contradictions of race, class, gender or temperament, it becomes an urgent necessity to challenge and undermine some of the basic assumptions of the form, in order to create the room for our protagonists to breathe. At another level, it's impossible to summon up new versions of any form without undertaking some kind of critical re-examination. The readiness to do this is reinforced by the way that we are literally attacked by the slackening of authority, by the spread of information, by revelations and contradictions which are in some way typical of what we know about crime, as opposed to what we believe about it.

'Crime and Punishment', Royal Festival Hall, London, SE1 (0171-960 4242). From £4. Mike Phillips' new novel, 'The Dancing Face', is published by HarperCollins on 22 May, £15.99

INSIDE

John Walsh meets Richard Wilson page 3



Death of the hunt: the rural impact

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APRIL ISSUE, ON SALE NOW

Games with pen and paper

Why buy designer games, when some of the best competitive pastimes need only a pen and paper? William Hartston reviews some old and new favourites

Are you bored with bridge and backgammon? Cheesed stiff with chess? Unmoved by Monopoly? Then why not get back to basics with some old-fashioned pencil-and-paper games. (Far better, of course, played with elegant fountain pen and parchment, which may be purchased with the money saved by not buying expensively packaged designer games.)

First comes noughts-and-crosses or tic-tac-toe. Yes, yes, we all know how to do it: if your opponent puts her cross in the middle, you have to reply in a corner, or if she starts in the corner, you have to go in the middle – and with only the slightest modicum of care, it always ends in a draw. But can you work out the right strategy for the reverse version, where completing a row of three loses the game? Again, there is a simple strategy that leads to a draw, but it's not at all obvious. See if you can work it out; there's an explanation at the end of this piece if you need it.

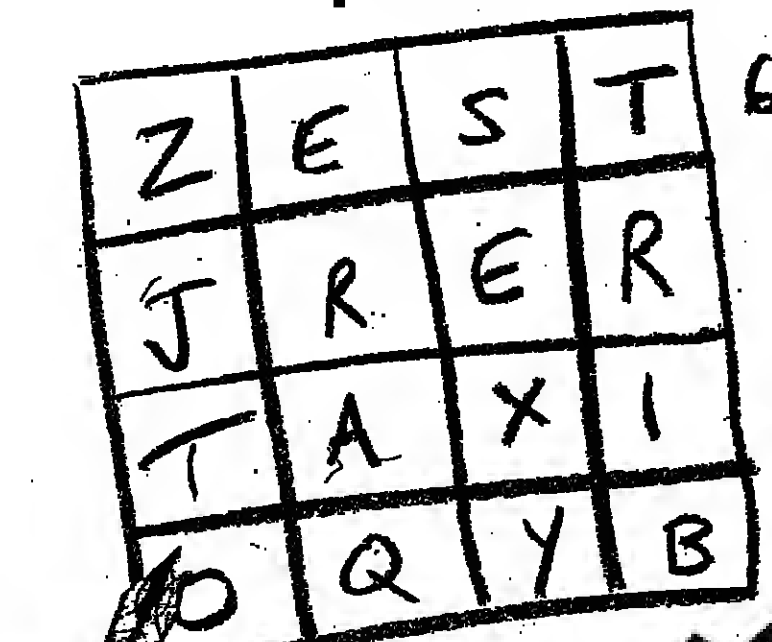
Here is another game, excellent for whiling away the time on train journeys. Usually called "Crosswords" or "Word Squares", it is also known, among true aficionados, as "Sexy Taxi", for reasons which will soon be apparent.

Played by any number of people (but two or three is best), the

game begins with everyone drawing a square on a sheet of paper subdivided into smaller squares. The starting grid may be of any agreed size, from four-by-four upwards, depending on how long you want the game to last and how many long words the players know. Play proceeds with each

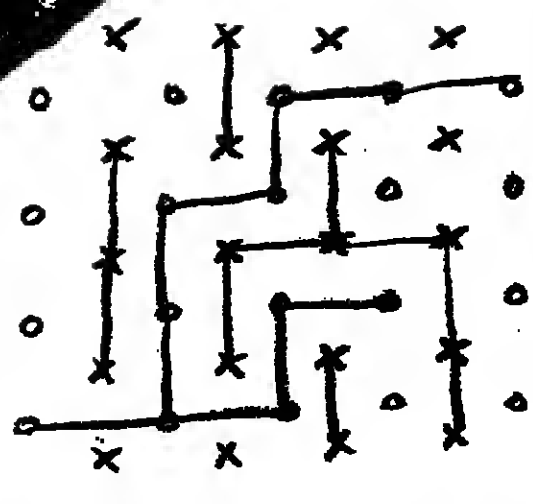
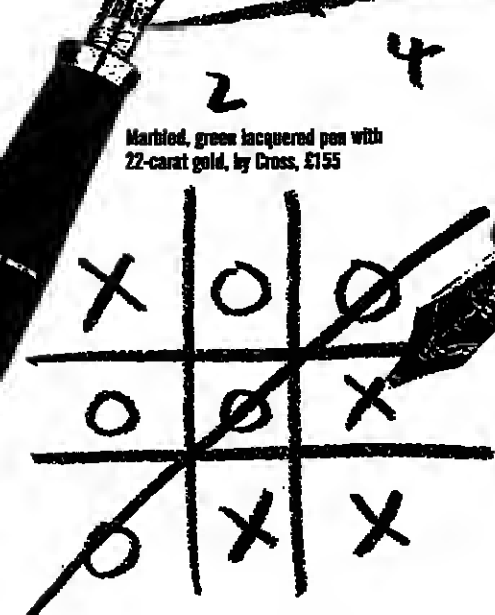
person in turn saying a letter, which must then be entered by each player on to an empty square on his grid. Each player knows only where he himself has placed the letter, not where the other players have put theirs. The object is to score points by forming words, read horizontally or vertically, with longer words scoring more points.

On a four-by-four grid, a good scoring system is 6 points for a 4-letter word, 4 points for a 3-letter word, and 2 points for a two-letter word. Each letter may be scored in only one word on each line. (So "BOAT" scores 6 as a 4-letter word, with nothing extra for "boa", "oat" or "at".)



Marbled, green lacquered pen with 22-carat gold, by Cross, £155

Solitaire white and yellow gold pen by Montblanc, from £5,200 to £7,800



It's a good idea to ensure that all players and the game having contributed the same number of letters, so with two or three playing on a five-by-five grid, it is sensible to start with an agreed letter already in the middle square. Once the game has started, sneaky players will think of words containing unusual letters, such as Q, X or Z, with which to embarrass their opponents towards the end of the game. Which is why the words SEXY and TAXI often crop up.

Another old favourite is Dots-and-Boxes, in which two players alternately fill in lines on a rectangular lattice of dots with the aim of completing squares. What gives this game an added tactical element is the rule that completion of a box is followed by another move by the same player. Well-played games thus tend to end with one player forced to make a move that lets his opponent complete a long chain of boxes. You can find a detailed account of the mathematics of Dots-and-Boxes in *Winning Ways for Your Mathematical Plays* by E.R. Berlekamp, J.H. Conway and R.K. Guy (Academic Press, 1982). There is also a good account of a \$500 Dots-and-Boxes tournament played among mathematicians, written up by Julian West as "Championship-Level Play of Dots-and-Boxes" in *Games of No Chance* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), but you need to have read the earlier work to understand much of the terminology.

Mathematically simpler, but no less taxing in real life, is the game of "Soaks" or "Chains" or whatever else you want to call it. An example can be seen to the right of the noughts-and-crosses board above. You start with two interlocking rectangular grids, shown here as crosses and circles, but it's simpler playing in two different colours. The grids shown here are five-by-four, but any size is possible as long as one dimension is one unit longer than the other. If the crosses are (n+1) across and n down, then the circles must be (n+1) down and n across.

One player takes the circles, the other the crosses, and they move alternately by joining two neighbouring dots. The object is to form a connected path from one edge to the other in the direction of the longer dimension. So in the above, crosses are heading from top to bottom, circles from left to right. Circles have just won by completing a path from bottom left to top right.

Since this game can never end in a draw (exercise for reader: prove it!), and moving first cannot be a disadvantage, the player who starts ought to win, but even on a relatively small six-by-five grid, the game is surprisingly complicated – and can be very confusing if you cannot find two pencils of different colours.

Finally, there is the game of Sprouts: draw a handful of dots (six or seven is a good number to start with) on a sheet of

paper, then, moving alternately, the two players draw a line joining two dots, or a loop joining one dot to itself. The move is then completed by adding another dot anywhere along the new line. The only rules are that no line may cross another (or itself); no line may be drawn through a dot; and each dot may have only three lines leading from it. The last player to make a move wins.

Finally, we cannot leave without mentioning Battleships. That's the game we all used to play at school, with agreed numbers of battleships, cruisers, destroyers and submarines depicted by lines of squares of different lengths on a grid, and the players naming squares in turn on which bombs were dropped in an attempt to locate and destroy the enemy flotilla. We mention it only because a reader has asked if anyone knows its origins. Our researches reveal two theories: 1) It was originally called "Jutland" and dates back to the First World War; 2) It was played by radio operators in the Second World War as a means of ensuring that communications were functioning properly. Can any reader throw light on this?

And before we forget, the correct strategy for losing-noughts-and-crosses is as follows: the first player must start in the middle, then reflect the opponent's moves through the centre. After any other opening move, you can be forced to complete a line of three and lose.

Games people play

Pandora Melly cooks up a wild newt at Scrabble

Hugh Fearley-Whittinghall, 32, Cook on the Wild Side

I've just been to the Seychelles with some friends. Holidays are the only chance I get to play games. Before we flew, I made two important shopping trips to buy a pocket backgammon set, travel Scrabble and 30 dice, with which we play Perudo. All the games got used a lot, but definitely the favourite was Scrabble. During the day it was far too hot to play, but as the sun went down, the Campari and soda came out, and we unfolded the Scrabble for some long and leisurely games.

One couple in particular are great fans. A few months ago I gave them a copy of the definitive Scrabble dictionary, but they forgot to pack it so we had the most enjoyable kind of game where you can argue because you can't check anything. If there's no dictionary to be had, you just have to thrash it out, which adds a whole new dimension to Scrabble: not just how many words you can

make, but how well you can fight your corner.

Some people have a knack for slipping in dodgy words without a fuss, and as the game progresses, somebody else is bound to say: "Oy, what does 'eff' mean?" by which time it's too late. The really infuriating situation is when you know that your word exists, but you've got no way of proving it.

My father is a very keen player. On family holidays to Cornwall, I knew when it was my bedtime because he'd get out the Scrabble board and play several games with his mate. I'd come down in the morning and there'd be a completed game, a load of empty bottles, and an ashtray blowing with fat-buzz. I remember looking at this maze of extraordinary words and wondering if I'd ever know what they meant.

'Eff', from the Old English 'effa', is an old name for a newt. 'Official Scrabble Words' is published by Chambers (£11.99 hardback, £5.99 paperback).

Don't junk it... use it

How to make this newspaper last 200 years



Someone on the wireless the other day said that it was European paper conservation week. I didn't hear what they had in mind – perhaps it was just a question of printing half a million leaflets telling people not to waste paper – but here are two ways to conserve the more important bits of *The Independent*.

embazon. Make a solution of equal quantities of white spirit and dish-washing detergent and soak the photocopy in it. Remove it, wiping off the excess liquid, then, while still damp, place it design side down onto the cloth and iron. The design will come off on to your cloth.

Important points to note:

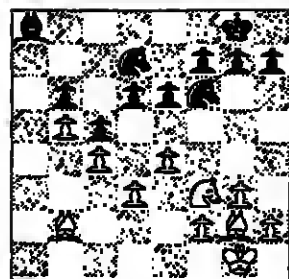
1. To keep this column until 2197: Dissolve a Milk of Magnesia tablet in a quart of Club Soda. Leave overnight, then put the newspaper cutting in a pan and pour the solution over it. Soak for one hour, then remove and pat dry. The paper (or so I am assured) should now last for 200 years.

2. To embazon the message across your pectorals: First procure a white T-shirt. Make a photocopy of the bit you want to be read by drivers in their mirrors, you should copy on to acetate first, then reverse it. 3) The design will survive for a couple of washes. If permanence is required, draw over the ironed design with a permanent marker.

Bawn O'Beirne-Ranelagh

The games page is edited by William Hartston

Chess William Hartston



Here's a piece of grand-mastery technique. This position was reached after 20 moves of the Kramnik-Illiescas game in Dos Hermanas this week. It looks as near to sterile equality as makes no difference. Now watch how Kramnik made something of it.

Phase nine: reduce one black piece to passivity. 21.Nd2 Ne8 22.Nb1 Bb7 23.f4 f6 24.Nc3 Kf7 25.Na4. Now at least the knight cannot move from d7.

Phase ten: advance in the centre: 25...Kd7 26.d4 Kd8 (he cannot let the bishop attack b6 from d4) 27.d5 exd5 28.Bb3 leads to the loss of the b6-pawn) 28...exd5.

Now Bb3 is seriously threatened, so Black needs another way to defend b6. He played 28...Ne7 29.Bh3 Na8 when it was time for phase three: increase K-side space: 30.Be6 Nf8 31.f5 Be8 32.Kf2 Bd7 33.g4 Ke7 34.g5.

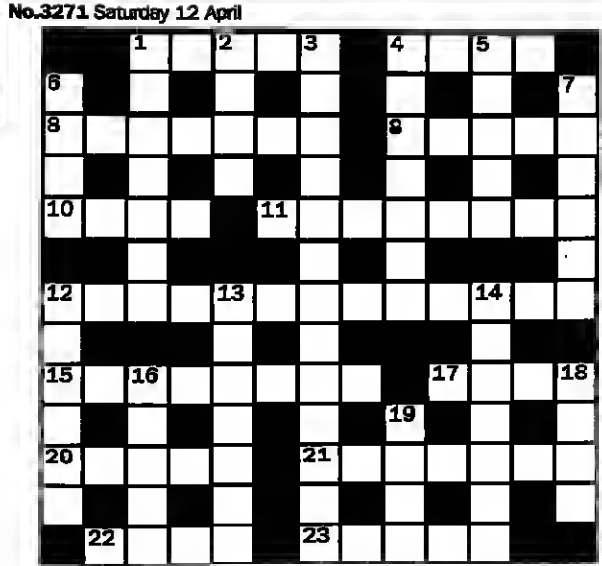
Now 34...f5 35.Bxg7 is good for White while 34...Be8 leaves the b6-pawn in dire trouble after 35.Be8 Nd7 36.Bb7 Ne7

37.Bc6. Illiescas decided to get rid of the bishop: 34...Nxc6 35.fxc6 Be8 36.gxf6+ gxf6. Phase four: get the bishop and knight to their best squares without losing the c-pawn: 37.Kc3 Bg6 38.Kd2 Be4 39.Bc1 Bg2 40.Kc3 Bf1 41.Bh6 Bg2 42.Bf4 Bf1 43.Nb2 Ne7 44.Nd1 Bg2 45.Ne3 Be4 46.Bh6 Ne8. Phase five: bring the king to f4 to enable Nf5+: 47.Kd2 Ne7 48.Kc2 Ne8 49.Kf2 Ne7 50.Kg3 Bd3 51.Kg4 Ne8 52.Kf4 Bb1 53.Nf5+. Now 53...Bxf5 54.Kxf5 Ne7 55.Bg7 Ne8 56.Bh6 leaves Black without a move.

Phase six: more driving back: 53...Kd8 54.Bf8 Bd3 55.Be7+ Kc7 56.Ne3 Kc8 57.Kg4 Kc7 58.Kh5 Nd7 59.Kh6 Ne8 60.b4 Kc8 61.h5 Kc7. Phase seven: the only way to make progress – a piece sacrifice: 62.Ng2 (thanks to his h-pawn advance, 62...Bxc4 63.Kxh7 now wins for White) 62...Kc8 63.Nf4 Bc2 64.Bd8!! Nd6 65.Kg7 Ne8+ 66.Kf7 Ne7 67.e7 h6 (67...Kd7 68.Ne6 Bd1 69.Nf8+ is even worse for Black) 68.Ne6 Bd1.

Now all it needs is phase eight: hair-raising tactics: 69.Kg6! (not 69.Nc7?? Bxf5+) 69...Ne8 70.Nf8 Be2 71.Kxh6 Bxg4 72.Kxg6 Bxg4 73.h6 e4 74.h7 Be4+ 75.Kf7 Bxh7 76.Kxh8 Bg8 77.Nd7 and Black lost on time. The threats of Kf8 or Nd6+ cannot be met.

Concise crossword



- ACROSS**
- Plant, source of laxative (5)
 - Impudence (4)
 - Canine breed (7)
 - Big (5)
 - Suave (4)
 - Worker (8)
 - Bank arrangement (8,5)
 - Member of US party (8)
 - Mark of wound (4)
 - Join together (5)
 - Unbeliever (7)
 - Intelligence (4)
 - Went astray (5)
- DOWN**
- Ruler's wife (7)
 - Unclothed figure (4)
 - Disputatious (13)
 - Italian astronomer (7)
 - Goods vehicle (5)
 - Help (4)
 - Shooting star (6)
 - Chemical element (6)
 - Aristocrat (7)
 - Resolved (7)
 - Indian corn (5)
 - Part in play (4)
 - At a distance (4)

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:
ACROSS: 1 Harassed, 2 Weed (Harold Tweed), 3 Revel, 4 Cheddar, 5 Instructor, 6 Lance-corporal, 7 Ambassador, 8 Westward, 9 Get on, 10 Editor, 11 Sufferer, 12 DOWNE: 1 Horrible, 2 Revising, 3 Solec, 4 Encyclopedia, 5 Edna, 6 Ditz, 7 Recomp, 8 Creditor, 9 Clarinet, 10 Enrily, 11 Sages, 12 Twice, 13 Free.

Bridge Alan Hiron

Game all; dealer South

North	South
♠ J 8 4	♠ A Q 6 5 3
♥ Q J 2	♥ K Q 5 3
♦ A 2	♦ 9 6
♣ A Q 6 5 3	♣ J 9 8 7
♠ 10 9	♠ 10 9
♠ A 10	♠ K 5 4 3
♠ K 10 6 4 3	

There are a number of suit positions such as Q,x in hand and A,x in dummy where declarer in a no-trump contract is assured of a double-guard as long as the lead comes from his left-hand opponent. The spade position on this deal was another example. South opened 1♠, North responded 2♠, and South rebid 2NT (suggesting minimum values for his opening). With something to spare North went on to game and West chose ♠Q for his

Perplexity

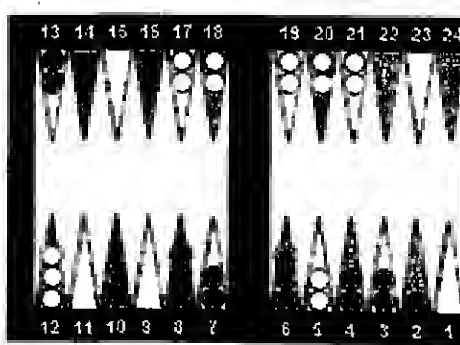
Today is 12 April, or to put it another way, 12.4.97. Now 12 + 4 = 9 + 7 (or you may prefer 1 x 2 - 4 + 9 = 7). Yesterday, -1 - 1 + 4 + 9 = 7, and tomorrow 1 - 3 + 4 = 9 - 7. The question is: which dates in April cannot be turned into correct sums without changing the order of the digits? Rules: No zeroes before single digits. Permitted signs are +, -, x, ÷, =, raising to a power, and decimal point. A prize of the new Chambers 21st Dictionary will be

opening lead against 3NT. Declarer saw matters in a simple light: there would be eight tricks after he had knocked out ♠A and a ninth if either the hearts or the clubs divided evenly. Accordingly, he won with dummy's ♠A and led ♥Q. East took his ace immediately and returned a careful ♠2 in order to give his partner a count in the suit. When declarer played the 10, West won and was confident enough to clear the suit with the lead of a low card. Now, when neither hearts nor clubs behaved, South was a trick short. Any suggestions? What about a low club to the eight at trick two? Remember, the spades were safe from attack from the West side. Now whatever West plays when he has won the club, there is plenty of time to drive out the ♠A and come to nine tricks. Would there have been any defence? Well, East could have gone in with ♠J on the second trick! But that would have been sheer clairvoyance with the club position guessed just as it was.

awarded to the first set of sums identifying the impossible dates, when we open entries on St George's Day. Answers to: Perplexity, *The Independent*, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL

29 March answers: Burglary (gray blur), Manslaughter (maths granule), Misdeameanour (resume domain) Winner: G W Perkins (Langport, Somerset)

Backgammon Chrs Bray



In this position Black has a 5,3 to play. The question is should he clear his mid-point with 13/8, 13/10 or play a waiting game with 6/1, 4/1?

First, let's look at the position and try to work out what is going on. Black has doubled and has a very healthy lead in the race by 98 to 139 before the roll. All he has to do is get those men home from the mid-point, and he will be virtually assured of victory. Should he take the risk now and leave White 13 potentially game-winning shots, or should he sit on the position and hope to throw a set of doubles to clear his mid-point? This is known as a "pay me now or pay me later" problem.

In the late Seventies there would have been no argument; everyone would have played 13/8, 13/10. That was the way they played in those days – the riskier the play the more they liked it.

In the Nineties we are a little wiser than our colleagues of the past, and we also have the tools and techniques to examine problems such as this in some detail.

When the "pay me now" option means the clear loss of the game, as it would do in this position, it is nearly always wrong, and this position is no exception. Black does better to play quietly and wait for either a set of doubles or, at the very least, a weakness in White's position which would give him some chances even if hit. If, for example, one of the two men on White's 5-point were on his 6-point, that would be sufficient to make 13/8, 13/10 the correct play, because many of the hits – for example 5,4 or 5,6 – wouldn't cover the blot on the 5-point, thus giving Black life after death. We shall return with more on this theme next week.

هكذا من الأصل

A victor, in spite of everything



John Walsh
meets...
Richard
Wilson

Resplendent in Beaujolais-hued tweed jacket, purple-pink shirt, chinos and a pair of head-turning shoes with black leather uppers and thick white rubber soles, Richard Wilson is putting the girls in the local coffee shop at their ease. "Do you do nice coffee in here?" he enquires in his unmistakable stentorian Scots. The girls stand rooted to their tills, eyes flickering in silent dialogue: It's him, the one who plays the crabby old git, what's his name, *One Foot in the Grave*, and he's asking me a question, Oh God, what do I say, I don't know my lines... "Cap-puc-cheen-o?" asks Wilson, his voice fastidiously sorting the syllables into neat piles. The girls look mortified, as if they know that any response will somehow be wrong, will lead to their being withered by scorn, incinerated by Victor Meldrew distaste. "Oh, we'll try next door," says Wilson unforgivingly, breaking the nerve silence, and we stride out, as if concluding a visit from the Gestapo.

You feel for the girls, but you've got to sympathise with Richard Wilson as well. Despite being perhaps the most famous actor in the UK, having played Victor the irascible scourge of *One Foot in the Grave* since 1991, he has never quite managed to ironise the correspondences the world feels between himself and his alter ego. So many tabloid stories, so many people calling him Victor when asking for his autograph or shouting "I don't believe it!" at him in the street, has left him with a short fuse about the Richard/Victor interface. How can people be so stupid as to mistake impersonation for self-expression? How can they confuse him with a 65-year-old early-retired curmudgeon when he is in fact a 61-year-old actor-director of equiblibral temper and a love of hard work? He just hasn't managed to find a benignly smiling public persona, a Yes-it's-me-but-I'm-not-like-him face that would explain it all in a second. Hence the squirming of the coffee-shop girls.

And he keeps on doing it. "I was in the Post Office the other day, buying stamps and I bought a Lottery card. This woman came up and said, [adopts horrible elderly screech] 'What do you want a Lottery card for? You don't need a Lottery card.' I said to her, 'Yes I do, I'm going to buy my own film company if I win.' And she said, [screech reprise] 'Oh - can I have a part in it?' I said, 'No you bloody well can't, talking to me like that...'"

He makes himself sound rather mean and hostile when it is clear that he is neither. He is warm and funny company. He laughs easily. He talks with reckless frankness about his views. Just don't even think of asking him about his private life. Richard Wilson discourages enquiries about his family, his love life, his relationships, home and personal feelings the way, say, Queen Victoria must have discouraged questions about the colour of her underwear.

He will, however, talk about his new venture in the heart of the West End: Monday is the first night of *Tom and Clem*, a new play by Stephen Churchett, which Wilson is directing at the Aldwych Theatre. It stars Michael Gambon and Alec McCowen as, respectively, Tom Driberg MP and Clement Attlee, who became British prime minister in 1945 after a wholly unexpected Labour landslide. The play is set at the Potsdam conference in the summer of that year, when Attlee joined Stalin and Truman in the task of deciding the post-war



Richard Wilson, a 61-year-old actor-director who just hasn't yet managed to find a Yes-it's-me-but-I'm-not-like-him face

PHOTO: GUYAN GRIFFITHS

fate of Europe. Despite the presence of Daniel de la Falaize and Sarah Woodward, it's virtually a two-hander with the leading men representing revolutionary passion and the compromises of *realpolitik*.

So what attracted Wilson, with his sturdied commercial instincts, to direct a play guaranteed to appeal (oo the face of it) only to readers of the old-style *New Statesman*? "It's extraordinary how opposite the play is for the time we're going through," he said. "I didn't know when the General Election was going to be but it seemed a good play to be putting on, about the passion of politics. Where's the passion? Driberg says at one point, 'Where are the songs?' And at the core of the play is this huge political argument, with Attlee saying 'Is compromise such a terrible word?'"

What did he make of Driberg, the Communist socialist, the gossip columnist and radical thinker, the obsessively, tentatively on-for-it gay satyr? "I was interested to see that, in his William Hickey column in the *Express*, oow and again, in among all the socialist stuff, he'd slip in some reference to the Welsh miners. But I don't understand his gayness, and the way he'd approach totally heterosexual people and seduce them. I don't understand that." Wilson shook his head with old-fashioned bafflement rather than distaste. "There was a case he was reporting on for the paper, where a woman had been killed. Driberg went round to see the woman's husband, and ended seducing him in the afternoon, in his own house." You can detect a faint trace of admiration in Wilson's voice, even as you register his horror at the idea of having total strangers from the press entering your home, let alone...

Directing McCowen as Attlee - the least charismatic premier in the history

of the world - was, I said, presumably a matter of saying "Do less" all the time. "What I said to Alec," said Wilson, "was 'I want to see how far we can risk making him a really boring man when you know he's not, that inside he's a very clever intellectual, a committed socialist and a party leader.' Not knowing much about the man, you have to start with this rather mousy, hunched figure. Alec, to his credit, will let out a terrible yell in rehearsal or in the tea-room and I'll say, 'Alec what's going on?' And he'll say, 'Well, you don't let me do it on stage...'"

I had a huge inferiority complex. I was a skinny, gawky child

The historical basis for the two men's convergence is shaky but just about plausible. "Churchill had left Potsdam to go to London for the election, and everyone thought he'd be coming back. But Clement Attlee came back instead."

Stalin couldn't understand it - he thought he'd rigged the election," said Wilson, wide-eyed, as if the Man of Steel had recently volunteered the information directly to him. "We know that Driberg went there because he'd just been to Buchenwald, to look at the camps. He went to Potsdam, and must have met Attlee, his new PM, there, although we don't know for sure. There's Attlee talking about 'the great task ahead' and about 'remembering our roots' and it all seems very appropriate for 1997."

Richard Wilson makes no bones about his own roots, in the Scots Presbyterian working class, or about the unreconstructed radicalism of his political views. He's been a keen Labour party activist and fund-raiser for years, but one who manages, by his own admission, to embarrass the party moguls. His ringing declaration - "I'm a member of the Socialist party and I support Tony Blair" - would make Peter

Mandelson pass out cold on the dressing-room floor. So would his attitudes to tax and education. "I believe education should be free," he says, "and I'd increase the tax on the rich to pay for it. Yes I do mean tertiary education. I know it's difficult to talk about, I know it'll cost a vast amount of money, and it's an unpopular view and one the Labour Party would hate to hear me talking about, but that's what I think government should be about." He suspects that, in the future, all parents will be charged university fees as well as living expenses. "If you're a working-class parent in Govan, and your child tells you they want to go to university but that it may mean you end up with debts of £40,000 - well, they won't understand the first thing about a deal like that. It's just going to become more and more elitist."

It's an interesting perspective to come from the rector of Glasgow University, a post Wilson was elected to last year, and into which he has dived with Dribergian passion. "It's fascinating to get into a world you've never even smelt before," he said. "But then I stood for election as a working rector. Some people said, 'How can you be our rector when you live in London?' I said, 'There's the shuttle, there's the fax. There's e-mail.' But equally, I made it clear that if someone asked me to do a great new movie in Thailand, I'd say yes." It's turned out much more likely that he'll say, "Sorry, but I'll keep me away from the university for too long," when producers come calling.

Hanging over all this - the rectorship, the education initiative - is the fact that Wilson himself did not go to the university he now runs. His life has not been ruined by this *lacuna*, and the tying-up of threads that the rectorship suggests doesn't strike him as any kind of redemption. "The thing is, I didn't know what it was all about when I was a kid. Nobody told me. The

idea of going to university was something beyond me, something I thought I was incapable of." What subjects was he good at? "I was best at science, which is why I became a lab technician for a while. And I liked English, but I'm not a great reader. I like looking - at pictures, the cinema, I love documentary. But I don't have a literary background." He pondered the long-distance attraction. "Looking back, I think I could say 'I wish I'd gone to university', but in some ways, who I am now is because I didn't go."

The most important thing I did in my teens was to drink alcohol

Fair enough. But there's a chippiness about Mr Wilson, a brittleness in the challenge implied by his peacock wardrobe and his over-deliberate coosooos, that goes straight back to his Glasgow childhood. The boy he was then clearly disgusted the man he has become. "I had a huge inferiority complex for one thing," he reveals. "I was a skinny, gawky child. Terribly shy." Were all his co-students robust and confident, then? "Much more than me." Was he good at sport? "I was good at running. But I had absolutely no desire to win." You begin to see how this might have been misinterpreted.

Wilson's father was an elder of the kirk, and a severe moralist who objected to his son's backsliding. "When I stopped going to church, my father would refuse to speak to me on a Sunday until he'd come back from the service." (Even the young Richard's beliefs were wrong.) Did he believe in God? "I must have done, because I used to pray to him." For what? "To make me fat," Wilson wailed.

His salvation came in a simple form. "The most important thing I did in my teens was to start drinking alcohol. If I hadn't started, I suppose I'd still be in

Scotland. I needed alcohol to give me opinions, to give me the courage to ask people out. Once I had a couple of pints in me, it was a great release. I remember thinking, 'Did I just say that?' Since the Greenock social scene in the early Fifties was a little upomprising ("It was pretty dire. It was the cinema, basically. Women weren't allowed in pubs at all") Wilson took up dancing, a skill at which he remains famously adept. Tango, salsa, fox-trot and samba were soon mastered; but it is significant that he was relieved when dancing became de-partnered? "It was a great day for me when you didn't have to do any more..." (he indicated a complicated bit of partner-twirling) "... and became a freer, groovier..." (he writhed his hands briefly round his head like Travolta in *Pulp Fiction*) "... when you could do your own steps." The modern cinema, National Service in Singapore, Rada and a fascination with what we now call "improv", and experimental theatre.

Tell me Richard, I said, all these things you do now which are so much not Victor Meldrew: appearing in fashion shoots in green Bryan Ferry suits, doing the Flora ads on television, cow-punching into Wyoming, directing in the West End, shuttling to Glasgow. Are you determined to show that you're not old-fashioned, dull, grey or Little Englandish? Or are you having some kind of mid-life crisis? He considered the proposition. "I don't think I'm having one of those because I don't know what the expression means. But I'm a great believer in not being old. My mental age is way below 61. I have this theory that, if you start to say, 'You're out supposed to play squash at 61', then you'll start to seize up. The honest answer to why I do so many things is that I've never been asked to do them before." And you could practically hear the put-upon gawky, silent schoolboy, whom oo-one even thought of sending to university, basking in an unfamiliar glow of acceptance, half a century on.

Ah, those tiresome interviews with opera stars. An excuse for an album plug or a lengthy tribute to this maestro or that diva. Until... one star, one of the highest stars, enjoys lunch just a little too much and fires a volley of prejudice and political incorrectness.

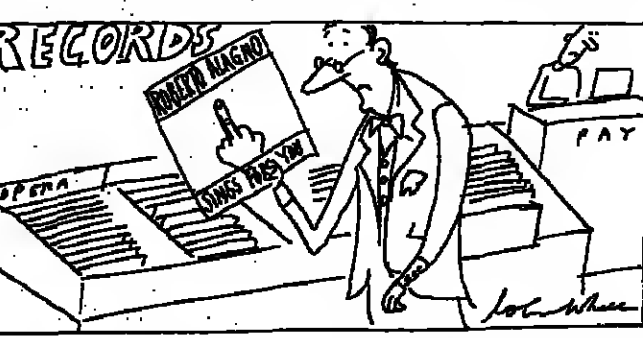
Roberto Alagna, hailed as the next Pavarotti, was interviewed in Paris this week. He was asked by one newspaper about the recent Channel 4 documentary *Naked Classics* about him and his wife, soprano and fellow dream-team member, Angela Gheorghiu. Alagna didn't much care for the comments made by first nighters at the Met in this documentary... oo let's use his own words as you might have missed them: "It's not reality, what they

showed on television. Those women who said I was out good. They were prostitutes. From the street. Hah! And that man who said I didn't hit the top C. I know he is homosexual. It's outrageous, outrageous!"

Now there's an object lesson in how to alienate a sizeable chunk of your opera audience around the world. Alagna hails from Sicily where I gather you wear your manhood on your sleeve in interviews. But I also gather that the remark about homosexuals went down less than well at EMI, his record company, where the phone lines were buzzing with panicked executives. It wasn't quite the pre-publicity quote they were looking for either at Glyndebourne where Alagna and Gheorghiu sing on 27 April. A Glyndebourne spokesman



distanced himself with comendable rapidity: "It's not our event. EMI has hired Glyndebourne for a gala." At EMI, a spokeswoman confessed: "The interview was not quite what we expected." Perhaps it is most charitable to see Alagna's remarks as a plea for open access and egalitarianism. A man who maintains



that New York streetwalkers can be found in the Met is an egalitarian at heart. West End producer Thelma Holt was not just in New York to toast the Broadway success of her production of *The Doll's House* this week. I gather that between performances she scoured the

Broadway theatres for ex-pats on stage, cornered them in their dressing-rooms and brought back their postal votes for the election. Janet McTeer and Owen Teale in her own production were made to sign. Then she walked along Broadway to collar Anthony Sher and Deborah Finlay appearing in *Stanley, Did*

she ensure she got a representative sample of the acting public? "Not bloody likely," Miss Holt replies. "You don't think I'd be traipsing up and down Broadway for the Tories do you?"

The first person I bumped into in my hotel on a visit to Karachi turned out to be veteran horror film actor Christopher Lee. It was a slightly surreal experience because Lee was accompanied by an army officer minder with a machine-gun and also because the tall, distinguished grey-haired actor looked uncommonly like the chap on the banknotes. Pakistan's founder Jinnah. Things rapidly got more surreal. The Pakistani press tried to whip up hysteria against an English actor playing the nation's hero, putting a picture of Lee playing Dracula

on the front page of the biggest English language daily. If this was mischievous, the next day's coverage was downright scurrilous, with a front-page headline asking "Is Jinnah film the new *Satanic Verses*?" It then emerges that the former editor of the paper, who has been writing these pieces, actually went for a part on the film and failed the audition. I took myself off to look at the restoration work being done on the Mohatta Palace, former residence of Jinnah's sister and discovered hidden in the grounds an old and decaying cadillac. This wreck, it turns out, was the founder of the country's private car. Perhaps Sotheby's should restore it and auction it off. Or, better still, do it up and give it as a present to Christopher Lee.

arts & books

Fromage frais

COMEDY The Cheese Shop
Hen and Chickens, London

It's ironic that the surreal comedy of Monty Python, designed to leave comedy conventions as soft as Dalí's watches, became a constrictive blueprint for hundreds of comedians. Generations of misguided undergraduate males who had the ability to run around and adopt high-pitched "female" voices believed that they could do comedy – without resorting to being funny.

Thankfully, sketch comedy was deadlier than Python's parrot until last year's Edinburgh Fringe Festival. This saw the flowering of a huge bunch of amusing sketch teams that could silly-walk their way across a stage with ease, including Perrier Award-nominees Armstrong and Miller, The League of Gentlemen and The Cheese Shop.

It's a measure of the rivalry of these exciting groups, all jostling for a chance to wear women's clothing on their own television show, that The League of Gentlemen did the ungentlemanly thing of being in the audience checking out the wares of *The Cheese Shop*, who already have a Radio 4 series under their belts.

This series, broadcast in January, contained some great moments but was patchy and suffered from a live student audience who had clearly been blowing their grants in the bar well in advance of the recording.

Live, the writing glistens with inspired collisions of ideas and, occasionally, even manages to struggle free of the Python straitjacket. But, it is the performance that lifts *The Cheese Shop* above their contemporaries. The opening gangster sketch, the lighthearted soap opera, the bizarre but hilarious laughing piano sketch and their brilliant employment of running gags, all underline their skill. Their timing rarely goes awry and their talent to play to the audience is highlighted by their ability to elicit laughs with just a sidelong glance.

They only succumb to the deadly lure of the completely unfunny once, in an ill-conceived sketch about a Royal Tournament competition involving dismantling and then re-assembling a jigsaw of a cannon. As flimsy and badly constructed as the jigsaw, it was composed entirely of the team running around, climbing over furniture and shouting a lot. In short, it was slapstick that needs a good slap.

Sketch groups, like boy bands, require the individuals to possess distinct specialisms to assemble a strong team. Get lucky and you have the comedy equivalent of Take That; get it wrong and you've got comedy Boyzone: six indistinguishable hokles and an evening pondering the ceiling to look forward to.

Fortunately, *The Cheese Shop* fall into the former category, with a cheeky chappie, an accout expert, a gifted musician, a gurner, a victim and an all-rounder.

If, at an hour and 20 minutes, the set is too long by half an hour, it's only to be expected in a show composed of oow material, but it's a confident stride forward from the Radio 4 debut and later outings should see the act being trimmed to a more audience-friendly length.

8-13 Apr and 22-27 Apr (0171-704 2001)
Anthony Thornton



Dig the Nigel Kennedy Experience: Kennedy in rehearsal this week

PHOTO: GERANT LEWIS

Nice one, Nige

After five years away, Nigel Kennedy is back, fusing Bartok with Hendrix. He's clearly lost none of his irreverence, but is he still a mean fiddler?

CLASSICAL MUSIC Bach, Bartok and Hendrix Royal Festival Hall, London

Germany saw it first, then Cheltenham last weekend and, on Thursday night, it was Loodoo's turn to savour the latest Nigel Kennedy phenomenon: a *Hendrix Concerto in Suite Form*. "Structures, not strictures" announced the promotional flyer and, true to form, this was no ordinary "classical gig". Purple "spots" softened the stage and the allsorts audience set up a crescendo of chatter before lights dimmed and a God-Save-the-Queen tune-up signalled Kennedy's imminent entrance. You should have heard the applause: it was tumultuous. And while the rest of the band sat among the shadows, Kennedy took centre-stage and launched straight into the opening "Tempo di Clacocoo" from Bartok's sinewy unaccompanied Violin Sonata, passionately, emphatically (he'd stamp the boards at virtually every bar) and with plenty of tenderness for contrast. The "Fuga" that followed was equally vehement, though, again, there was sensitivity to spare. This was the Kennedy of old, shy but unstinting, personable yet wholly consumed by the score at hand.

Bartok's fugue is traditionally followed by a soulful "Melodia" and, having been primed for

"structures not strictures" (my italics), that was what I expected. But, no, Kennedy's scheme was to fracture Bartok's structure at the centre and use some of his *Hendrix Concerto* as filling. Or perhaps the idea was to offer a little light relief, this not being your regular chamber-music audience – and let's face it, Bartok's solo Sonata is a pretty tough nut to crack. So, Kennedy stood back, blended among a string quartet, double-bass and guitar, the oswung into "3rd Stone from the Sun", a sort of free-wheeling ramble on *Deep River*. Smiles of recognition registered all around: everyone knew the Hendrix original. Not me, though – I could only treat the score as "variations on a theme".

Kennedy's solo work was mostly agile and loose-wristed and the "Little Wing" that followed summoned much hectic trilling and chirruping, vaguely familiar though hardly a visceral match for Hendrix's raucously disruptive soundworld. I'd assume that the mobile phone that rang from somewhere in the stalls wasn't a protest "from the other side". The switch from Hendrix back to Bartok was both bizarre and ineffectual: I felt as if I'd returned to my CD player after having spent a spell in the

kitchen with the tranny on. Again, Kennedy played beautifully and the audience was intensely attentive. Of course, they could have swallowed the work whole, just as, beyond the interval, they sat spellbound by a forthright, stylistically romantic and technically assured account of Bach's "Chaconne". More Hendrix dominated the second half, time-wise at least, with a purple light-beam posed for "Purple Haze". As Kennedy turned on the heat, a nearby party of senior citizens shuffled shyly to the nearest exit – which was a shame, because, had they stayed, they could have enjoyed an impromptu appearance by the ooe-tune pop star Dococan, poised in lieu of an encore and as harmlessly off-the-wall as Kennedy's *Hendrix Concerto*. My own preference would have been for the ferocious rhythms of Bartok's Fourth String Quartet or the teeth-baring Devil in Stravinsky's *Soldier's Tale*. Hendrix remembered smacks too much of nostalgic cross-over; but then, who could deny that Nigel Kennedy, like the rest of us, is finally getting old?

Robert Cowan

A world well lost

THEATRE Antony and Cleopatra
Bridewell Theatre, off Fleet Street, London

The Bridewell Theatre, just a stone's throw from Fleet Street, used to be a Victorian bath-house and still retains many aspects of its former identity. Added to these at the moment is the sunken blue pool that is a central feature of Carol Metcalfe's new production of *Antony and Cleopatra*. This isn't always an unalloyed asset but there are times when it genuinely earns its keep. "Here is my space," proclaims the hero in Scene 1, rejecting the summons back to Rome (and to duty) by obstinately stepping into this watery Egyptian amenity in his kaftan. The magniloquence of his speech and the somewhat schoolboy defiance of the gesture create a nicely mixed effect.

The pool comes in even handier for emphasising Antony's almost farcically botched suicide. Fooled by the false report that Cleopatra has killed herself, Jonathan Oliver's Antony falls oot just onto his sword but also into the water, which is then bathed in red light and which, for a protracted few seconds, appears to have become his grave. But the elegiac mood is rudely broken when he is forced to re-surface, his attempt at a noble death collapsing in sudden indignity like some failed stunt. Only by the glorious self-transcendence of Cleopatra's own eventual suicide can restitution be made for this hanging.

Oliver is much the best actor in this staging, which Metcalfe has set in 1942. Neither he nor his Cleopatra (Alphonsia Emmanuel) are in the first or even second flush of youth but – for a play that focuses, with more than a touch of satire, on middle-aged love – you need actors who look like veterans of veocry and quite a bit more battered by time and experience than this pair. There's not enough abandonment or embarrassing extravagance here in their expressions of love. We are treated to one arousing moment when Oliver worshippingly adjusts the tie, belt and trousers of the male khaki uniform his lover has donned, but for the most part you miss the sense of exhibitionistic amorous display. Beautiful, long-limbed and capable at times of ringingly eloquent verse delivery, Ms Emmanuel is a striking Cleopatra, but not a fascinating, witty or tantalising one.

Metcalfe intriguingly ends the first half with a spotlight on the isolated, pensively unhappy figure of Ruth Bennett's Octavia – a stage-picture that accentuates her role as pawn in the power game between her husband Antony and her brother Octavius Caesar, who, in Angus Hubbard's performance, comes over as an unusually repellent, cold, priggish school prefect. A wider sense of the unlovely self-interest and public decadence that fill the world of this play – where war is the continuation by other means of personal vendettas and where the political survival of the military top brass is a higher priority than defeating the enemy – can't be fully transmitted in a scaled-down production with a cast of only eight.

The design doesn't help. The three triangular movable platforms of Bridget Kimak's set trap the action in too confined a space (a hit like staging *Aida* on an Olympic medalist's rostrum, giving this most restless of plays a curiously static feel. A decent but disappointing evening. To 3 May. Box-office: 0171-936 3456

Paul Taylor

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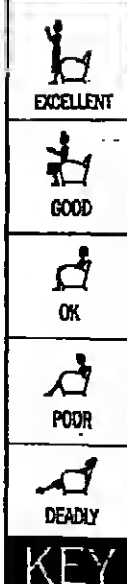
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THE OPERA The Damnation of Faust

Producer David Alden and conductor Mark Elder, twin talents of ENO's glory days, return with Berlioz's opera which he never intended for the stage. Bonaventura Bottone plays Faust, Willard White is Mephistopheles and Louise Winter is Marguerite in a typically bold production designed by Roni Toron.

Edward Seckerson had no doubts. "Weird and wonderful Berlioz finds a kindred theatricality in the weird and wonderful Alden... (of Elder) Phrases lengthen, pianissimo intensity, and when the big bangs come... you feel as well as hear them." "What the whole caboodle was supposed to add up to I cannot begin to suggest. The best thing about the evening was the actual sound," frowned *The Times*. "Alden was back at his old tricks again, returning to the infant terrible form that so terrified us poor London opera fans in the 1980s," stuttered *The Telegraph*. "The charisma and singing of Willard White... Alden is satirising modern production styles... but sometimes the underlining is too heavy," equivocated *The Standard*. "Betrays Berlioz," denounced *The Spectator*.

At ENO, the Coliseum, London WC2 (0171-632 8300) 16, 19, 23, 30 April, 2 May at 8pm and 26 April at 6.30pm.

Arch-purists will shudder at this production of a barely stageable work but Elder reminds you of what this orchestra can do and Alden, as ever, encourages performances of passionate commitment. Not his greatest production, but undeniably theatrical.

THE PLAY Marlene

Pam Gems attempts to do what she did for Piff, Queen Christina and Stanley Spencer with a Dietrich bio-play. Sian Phillips dons the wig and a copy of the trademark Jean-Louis gown to star as the legendary actress, singer and star. Sean Mathias directs Lou Gish and Billy Mathias, his mother, in supporting roles.

Paul Taylor nodded at this "sketchy, predictable, lazily assembled, and, to be honest, really rather enjoyable show... the Taj Mahal bathed in moonlight is scarcely less majestic a monument than Phillips's cheekbone-flaunting Dietrich." "Calculated, skilful magic, going straight for the emotional jugular with a heady mixture of myth, nostalgia and style," gloried *The Mail*. "Her fans will not be disappointed; nor Dietrich fans either," admitted *The FT*. "For all Phillips's excellence... somewhere inside Gems is a *Hellal* reader, embarrassingly in awe of celebrity," diagnosed *The Times*. "Phillips transforms a dodgy script into a personal triumph," agreed *The Telegraph*. "Sean Mathias' production ends up looking uncomfortably like a two-hour turn from *Stars in Their Eyes*," asserted *The Standard*.

At the Lyric, Shaftesbury Ave, London W1 (0171-494 5045) until 21 Jun.

In dramatic and biographical terms, a woefully missed opportunity but the final half hour – a concert – is uncannily good and, with Phillips singing "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?", ultimately moving.

THE FILM The People vs Larry Flynt

Former Oscar-winner Milos Forman directs Woody Harrison as Larry Flynt, America's famous pornographer and publisher of *Hustler*, who fought a landmark legal case over the First Amendment guaranteeing free speech. From the scriptwriters of *Ed Wood*, also starring Courtney Love and hot new talent Edward Norton.

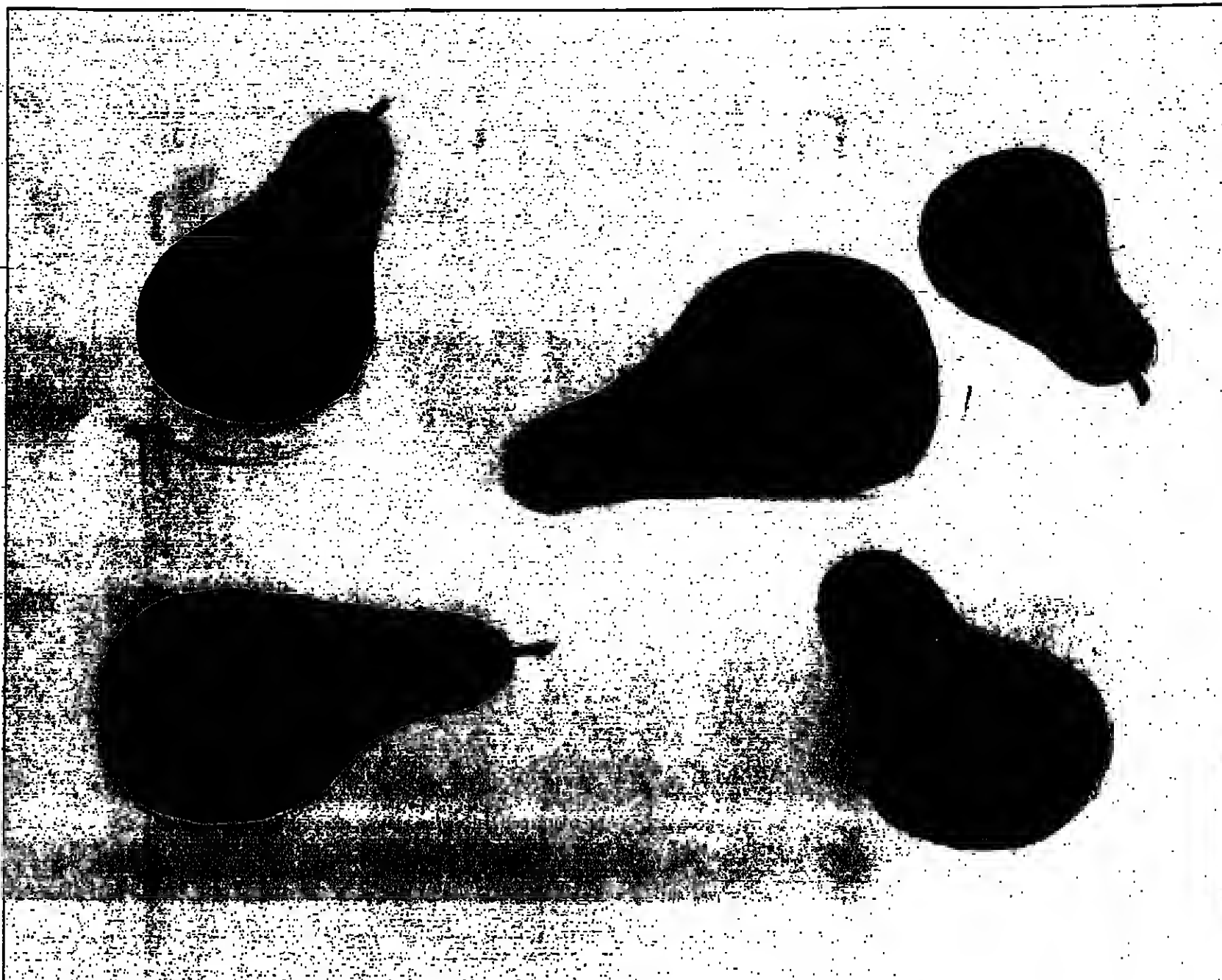
Ryan Gilbey smelt a rat. "Any illusions about this being a political work are quickly dispelled by the film's eagerness to portray everyone but Larry and his clan as sub-human." "This screed of scatological Americana... Would Columbia Pictures be prepared to take on a movie defending the author of *Mein Kampf* on similar grounds? You wouldn't have to be Jewish to object," thundered *The Standard*. "Harrison puts on a great show as the porn merchant who rightly labels himself a scumbag, yet still earns our admiration for his honesty and fighting spirit," welcomed *The Times*. "The exploitative misogyny of Flynt's output is never examined... profoundly problematic entertainment," worried *Time Out*. "Good causes make shaky and sanctimonious movies," aphorised *The FT*.

Cert 18, 130 mins, on general release.

Fiercely attacked in the USA for glossing over Flynt's rampant misogyny, it received good reviews and won Oscar nominations but bombed badly at the box-office. (Courtney) Love, however, conquers all.

مكتبة من الأصيل

Pared down: 'Orchard of Pears', No 15, 1977, oil on canvas. Estate of the artist (right); a portrait of William Scott by Alfred Jones (below)



William Scott, currently the subject of a retrospective show at the Bernard Jacobson Gallery, was one of the leading abstract painters of his generation. He played a major role in bringing British painting back into the mainstream after the isolation of the Second World War and was the first British painter to make contact with Pollock, Rothko and Kline in New York in the 1950s. Much of his painting was done in his studio in Somerset, where he taught at the Bath Academy of Art from 1946 to 1956. He liked to think of himself as belonging to a "west country school" that included the abstract painters of St Ives. Here, Scott's oldest surviving friend, Alfred Jones, one of the group of artists, musicians and writers (including Dylan Thomas) who grew up together in Swansea in the pre-War years, recalls their friendship, formed while they were students at the Royal Academy. Below, Richard Ingleby reviews the exhibition

William Scott: a life study

About 10 years ago William Scott telephoned me to say that the BBC were about to show a film of his early life in Enniskillen made by his son James. I found it intensely moving. The landscape in which he lived, the tragic death of his father (he had fallen fatally attempting to rescue the victim of a fire) and the influence of his first very enlightened teacher all seemed to have contributed to the Scott I knew.

The film ended where and when we first met - our arrival at the Royal Academy 'Schools' in September 1931. He came with his close friend William Tocher, a fellow student at Belfast. I came from Swansea. Three provincials in a new world, we became friends immediately.

Tocher and Scott (sumames were almost invariably used) were then in the Sculpture School and I was in Painting but we met in the famous semi-circular drawing studio.

I was concerned then to draw as faithfully as possible what I saw, but Scott seemed to be after something else. I can only describe it (and I remember clearly the first life drawing of his that I saw) as a kind of essence, stripped entirely of inessential detail and, by virtue of its strangely esoteric quality, difficult to put into words.

It was a characteristic that I think clearly marked his work throughout: all his drawings, the early delightful "other world" still lifes of fish, eggs and utensils, his progress towards abstraction and the final large paintings where austerity, essence, geometry and evocation come together.

I know of no instance where the work of an artist seems to reflect more his personality.

We were lucky. Our principal drawing lecturer at the Royal Academy was Tom Hunnington, an artist of great stature possessing all the patience and skill that are the necessary gifts of a great teacher.

We were surrounded by rare beings. In the "out of the way" rooms, Peter Scott was even then constructing models of birds and Mervyn Peake could transform a perfectly normal model in the life class into a character from *Gormenghast*.

Outside it was bleak. It was 1931; soon after the great depression, money was scarce. That we were all skint goes without saying.

After a year or so of digs we began to stretch our wings. William and I moved to an apartment in a house in St John's Wood with Scott, Med - a gentle giant from Canada, and Edith - Broadhouse (who later became a BBC designer). Broadhouse in a memoir recalls when Scott, having come by bus from St John's Wood, carried an iron saucepan of stew down Bond St to be heated up in the college Common room, a gift from our landlady, a sign of the times.

Shortly afterwards, William and I moved, with Bernard Hallstone (who became a noted portrait painter and President of that society) into an unfurnished flat in Redcliffe Road. It was some time before we collected some furniture and quite a while before we were to be seen carrying mattresses, picked up at knock-down sales, one after the other, down Fulham Road.

It was certainly one of the most enjoyable and exciting periods of my life. There was little social activity at the Academy - there were just not the facilities - we simply spent our working day there and went back to Chelsea.

Fortunately, we had many links with the Royal College of Art - several fellow students from Swansea and Belfast were there and gradually our leisure mingled with theirs. The Friday night "hops" there were the high spot of the week and only the most serious interruption would keep us away. It was also an intensely formative time, one of



endless discussion. We were all immensely stimulated by the great artists of the period, from Picasso to Klee, from Gabo to Epstein.

By a stroke of luck, a fellow student at the Royal Academy, apparently quite well to do, had taken the flat above us, and soon preferred our unfurnished but happy shambles to his well-appointed isolation.

He joined us and brought with him a few luxuries, above all a collection of records that added enormously to our enjoyment: Schubert playing Beethoven piano concertos; Mozart Symphonies; that wonderful Bach double violin concerto and perhaps for us, even more revealing, a broad introduction to the later composers Ravel, Debussy, Scriabin, Prokofiev and Stravinsky.

About that time two incidents occurred that I shall never forget. Our friend Tocher had heard that it was possible to hire a boat at

Richmond or Putney (or somewhere nearby) and, with the aid of the strong tidal current, row to Limehouse - then catch the returning tide for the journey back.

Tocher, William and I with one other (I forget whom) decided to make the trip. We made fair time to a point not far from Tower Bridge, swept along at a cracking pace. Unfortunately, at one point we were confronted by a series of barges moored side by side.

We could not change direction quickly enough and were swept against them. The only solution was to push ourselves along to the outermost boat but we could only do this by standing and pushing above our heads. But the more we pushed the more we rocked and it was only after what seemed an interminable struggle that we reached the last barge - exhausted by a combination of effort, panic and hysterical laughter.

Needless to say our timing was of similar standard to our navigation. We reached Limehouse but somehow missed the return tide. Eventually we reached our point of departure in the early hours of the following day to greetings from the boat hire entirely lacking in warmth.

We traipsed back to Chelsea, hungry, cold, and with our enthusiasm for boating sadly diminished.

The other occasion was as triumphant as the excursion was disastrous. Someone had heard that the large emergency exit doors of the Albert Hall were not locked during events but held shut by powerful springs allowing exit but not entry.

There was nothing to grip on the outside but, the report maintained, a sufficiency of fingers appropriately applied could do the trick.

This seemed feasible if somewhat nefarious and half a dozen of us, including William, decided to test the theory by attending the Chelsea Arts Ball by this means - having no other.

It was a case where experiment and practice on the spot were ill-advised so rehearsals were carried out on less distinguished doors. They indicated a reasonable chance of success and so it proved.

I was the tallest of the team, Scott was the shortest. We took up appropriate positions with the other four ranged in between and, to our joy, persuaded the heavy door to give way. We pelted up the staircase and immediately mingled with the crowd. It was a glorious night but I have a strong feeling that, for all of us, the climax was really at the beginning rather than at the end.

Towards the end of that period, I found the conflict between our training at the Royal Academy, excellent though it was, and the exhibitions of contemporary work that surrounded us so disturbing that I left the Academy.

I stayed on with the others for a short period painting in the flat -

something of a factotum - preparing our evening meals of vegetable stews etc and wondering what on earth to do next. One was now highly trained, but not to earn one's living. I returned to Swansea for a summer break and then took a flat in Redcliffe St in Chelsea where I was joined by Dylan Thomas whom I had met with my then "old" friend Daniel Jones, the composer.

Scott lived nearby and we all spent much time together. He and Dylan were soon firm friends. In later years, I realised how much that friendship had meant to him, but I did not realise, until Scott's memorial service at St James' Church when his sons James and Robert read two of his poems, that Scott had written poetry himself.

The new flat was daunting. Once more, just bare boards and a few boxes, but help was at hand. Pamela Hansford Johnson (later to become engaged to Dylan) and her mother had furniture in store, some of which they kindly lent us. We were able at last to all sit down at the same time.

Dylan liked neither the discomfort nor the cold; he wrote much of "The Nap of Love" sitting up in bed fully dressed in pork pie hat and large checked overcoat, fags and beer to hand. The artist Mervyn Levy - we had been at the Swansea School of Art together - was now at the Royal College of Art along with other Swansea friends and he soon joined us. This *ménage à trois* became something of an asylum for deranged poets and impecunious painters. One visitor whom I shall never forget was a young boxer whom Dylan had rescued from the aftermath of a clash between Fascists and Communist supporters at what, I seem to remember, became known as the "Battle of Olympia". He had been beaten up and took several weeks to recover.

The years 1934 and 1935 were a period of great tension, already foreshadowing the war. On one occasion, Mervyn, William and another close friend, the painter Will Evans - who had also studied at the Royal Academy - and I had a most unpleasant first-hand experience.

We were returning at night by tube from the West End to Earl's Court when a group of black-shirted youths began to taunt Mervyn, who enjoyed dressing in somewhat bizarre fashion (trousers slashed to the knee and one half of his face clean shaven, the other half bearded).

At the entrance to the tube station they met with a group of some 30 or 40 others - obviously on their way to a rally. They immediately surrounded us, jostling and threatening. Fortunately, our propensity for "endless discussion" already referred to came to our aid; it took what seemed an age to convince them that we were not "Trotsky's best friends". Mollified, eventually they went their way. That kind of confrontation was sadly all too frequent at the time.

At the next move - to Coleherne Road - we joined up with Scott once more. It was 1934. Scott continued at the Royal Academy Schools and I think it must have been about that time that he decided to switch from sculpture to the painting school.

A fortunate choice, I believe, because he was to make to British painting a uniquely personal contribution, unique for the quality of his vision and, perhaps above all, for its absolute honesty.

Once again, I returned to Swansea for the summer months, but remained there until the war. Dylan lived half in Swansea and half in London.

It was from Dylan that I had news of Scott. We met once more in Cornwall in 1936 where he married Mary Lucas, a fellow sculpture student. Subsequently, they lived in Italy and France and it was not until after the war that we resumed contact. His career from that time is well documented.

William Scott began his artistic training as a sculptor but, in 1934, after three years at the Royal Academy schools in London, he switched to painting with the now famous grumble that he couldn't stack sculptures under his bed. Not, as it turned out, that he ever had to hide his paintings away: in a career that spanned some 50 years, his work was exhibited widely and regularly in the US and Germany as well as here, from his first one-man show in 1942 right up until his death in 1989.

A mini retrospective of 18 paintings from 1946 to 1983 at the Bernard Jacobson Gallery in London shows something of the consistency of Scott's talents over the years and his life-long devotion to the still life as subject. The work moves through several recognisable phases: from the carefully constructed figurative pictures of the late 1940s; into various degrees of object-based abstraction; to an even simpler sort of still life painting in the 1970s and early 1980s.

The earliest period (the worst served by the current exhibition) was one of the best. "I find beauty in plainness," he said in 1947, "a conception that is precise"; a precision that led to pictures that

work like a set of scales, finely judged, with each of the ingredients balancing the whole.

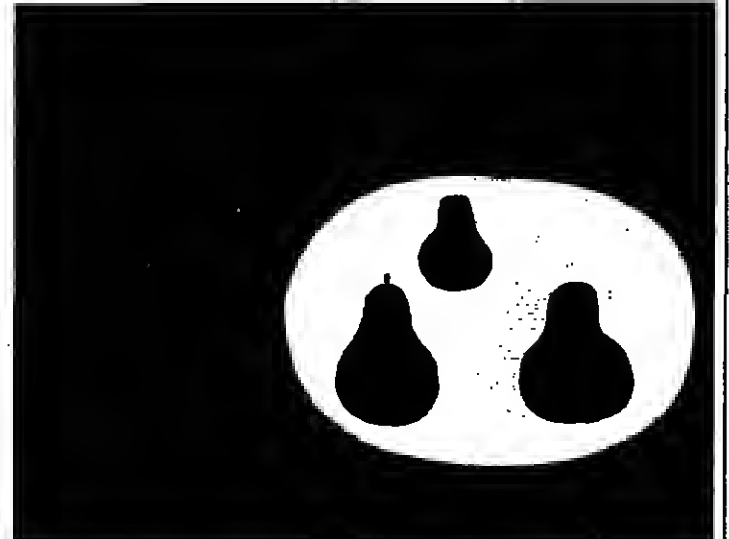
In 1946 Scott was appointed Head of Painting at Bath Academy of Art, based at Corsham, and began to spend his summers in Cornwall where he met Peter Lanyon, Terry Frost and Bryan Wynter, all of whom soon joined his staff. They introduced him to Ben Nicholson, Patrick Heron and Roger Hilton and, for a decade, currents flowed back and forth between Corsham and St Ives.

In this company, Scott began to further simplify his forms and colours to the point when he was left with combinations of black lines on creamy white fields. They are the most restrained and subtle pictures of his career. Sometimes suggesting a table top, or a harbour, a landscape, or a figure or, as with *Figure into Landscape*, one of the best works in the Jacobson show, a transformation from one to the other. 1953, the year that Scott painted *Figure into Landscape*, was also the year that he visited the US and encountered Abstract Expressionism at first hand. He was one of the first British painters to grasp what it was all about and, rarer still for an English painter in the 1950s, he found an audience there for his own work, especially

in New York where meetings with Pollock, Kline and de Kooning left him impressed but not seduced: "My impression at first was bewilderment. It was not the originality of the works, but the scale, audacity and self-confidence." Rothko, in particular, appealed to him in peculiarly English terms: "A synthesis of Turner and Nicholson," as he put it.

Scott always saw his own work as wedded to a European, particularly French, tradition. His interest in still life, he once said, stemmed from "a desire to look at Cézanne through the eyes of Chardin", but his US experiences gave him the confidence to paint bigger; often with striking results (witness *White and Ochre*, 1960 and the later *New Still Life Study*, 1983, both in the current show). To my eye, however, the three strongest pictures are also the smallest. *Figure into Landscape* being one; a white and orange still life of pots and pans from 1958 being another; and, smallest of all, *Quiet River*, 1962 - a thin arc of blue squeezed from the tube across thick sweeps of creamy paint laid on with a knife.

In late 1960s and early 1970s, Scott turned again to abstraction, but of a more austere, more



'Orchard of Pears', No 12, 1977

Estate of the artist

minimal nature than before, which in time led to a softer, simplified return to the still life theme. These pictures are often more complex than they first seem, marked by subtle differentiations of colour and tone, but all but the best of them lack the precision that gave his earlier work its edge. He also, occasionally, turned to the figure, remembering his wife Mary as his model in the 1940s. One such

painting, *Reclining Nude Orange Pillow*, 1980-82, is the unhappy note on which the Jacobson exhibition ends. It is a terrible picture that mars an otherwise excellent selection. The Bernard Jacobson Gallery, 14a Cornwall Street, London W1 (0171-955 8575). To 26 Apr. Smaller selection also on show at Jonathan Clark & Co, 18 Park Walk, SW10 (0171-351 3555)

Robert Hanks on mortality, and Jasper Rees on recycling, page 31

THE INDEPENDENT

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Rocks and hard places

Marek Kohn explains why cows and sheep helped history's top dogs



The Easter Islanders who built these figures died out because they exhausted the resources of their remote Pacific home and had nowhere else to go. From *The Story of Archaeology* (Phoenix, £14.95)

Tin protest against the bicentennial celebrations in 1988, an Australian Aborigine staged a mock-invasion of an English beach for the benefit of the cameras. His point was that we wouldn't think there was anything to celebrate if the First Fleet had sailed in the opposite direction, and the Australians had subjugated us.

The absurdity of the idea lets the steam out of its rhetorical point. Britain was a literate, ocean-going, industrialising state; the original Australians lived by hunting and gathering, using stone tools. Until recent times, whites considered that the explanation for the difference was straightforward. Whites were racially superior to black races, and that was that.

Now, the idea of racial superiority is in a similar position to smoking. Large numbers of people still adhere to it, but their ability to indulge in public is

Guns, Germs and Steel: a short history of everybody for the last 13,000 years by Jared Diamond, Cape, £18.99

restricted. Because it is absent from polite society, it can have an effect without facing critical scrutiny. It jostles below the surface, alongside a vague feeling that human societies are complex things which must be shaped by more than a single influence. Even vaguer, however, is our grasp of what those influences might be.

Jared Diamond aims to provide a popular account of these influences, and how they have played out in all corners of the world. He brings good news. First, race doesn't matter. If alien scientists had transferred the prehistoric Australians to Britain, and vice versa, the former would have taken up farming, forged metal tools and perhaps sent fleets to force the Antipodeans out of the Stone Age. Like

Europeans around the world, they would have achieved this mainly by bringing in germs to which local populations had no immunity, as well as by guns and blades.

Second, the choice is not between claims based on race alone, and counter-arguments that depend on multiple factors so elusive that one can only gesture in their direction. There are, Diamond asserts, just four major influences over the fortunes of peoples. These are the availability of plant and animal species suitable for domestication; the orientation of land masses; their connections with each other, and their area or population size.

Eurasia came out on top on all counts. It gave its human inhabitants species such as sheep, rather than kangaroos. It lies east to west, with fewer climatic barriers to the movement of exploitable species than in north-south continents such as Africa. Eurasia was isolated from the

Americas and Australia, restricting the diffusion of its livestock or technology. And its size encouraged innovation, with more societies in competition.

The basic simplicity of Diamond's model makes *Guns, Germs and Steel* a pleasure to read. As one ranges across the continents, ways of life, crops, alphabets and political forms, the blank areas in the atlas of humankind seem to fill up with landmarks and terrain. The book serves as a sketch of how he would like historical study to develop, as science rather than one damn fact after another.

There are, however, some questions for biological science to clarify if that project is to proceed. According to Diamond, the "Fertile Crescent" of Eurasia was a zone in which the ecology and geography were just right to encourage the start of farming. But according to a recent paper from the fringe of race science, the secret of the

Crescent's success was its central location among human populations, which caused genes for intelligence to collect in it. Conversely, those genes remained sparse in peripheral areas such as Australia. That the Crescent was fertile and Australia barren was taken to be mere coincidence.

Diamond's model is far more persuasive, but he has more in common with the racial view than the bulk of his book suggests. He does not address current scientific-racist arguments directly, skipping over IQ tests in a paragraph. Yet one casual claim affirms a fundamental tenet of the scientific-racist paradigm – that some peoples are naturally smarter than others. "Natural selection promoting genes for intelligence has probably been far more ruthless in New Guinea than in more densely populated, politically complex societies," he suggests, concluding that "in mental ability, New Guineans

are probably superior to Westerners". The veteran big hitters of scientific anti-racism, such as Stephen Jay Gould, would probably sooner eat a copy of *The Bell Curve* than make a statement like that. Perhaps *Guns, Germs and Steel* represents a new tendency, in which liberals stress environmental factors while trying to redistribute claims of genetic superiority from dominant to marginal peoples. The first part of this strategy is vital, and Diamond has performed a valuable service in giving shape to the play of environmental forces. The second could boost the resurgence of race science by taking liberal opinion from its traditional position, which denies that genes influence intelligence, straight to the opposite camp, where racial inequality is seen as a fact of nature. If scientists believe there is a middle ground between these two positions, now is the time for them to speak up.

Life, the universe and everything

George Walden wrestles with the Big Ideas in a sprawling Dutch landscape

The Discovery of Heaven by Harry Mulisch, translated by Paul Vincent, Viking, £17

In Italian religious painting, unity between the upper and lower levels is often assured by abstracting the earthly (for example, through idealised figures) and humanising the sublime (as in those smirking putti). So heaven and earth are made to intermingle in an aesthetic whole. Relating the natural to the supernatural, the top to the bottom of the canvas, is more challenging in literature, where there are fewer ready-made conventions. This is the task that the Dutch writer Harry Mulisch squares up to unflinchingly in his new novel, *The Discovery of Heaven*.

We begin in the top half, with a prologue introducing us to the deities who contrive the book's plot. Their status is ambivalent. Only loosely in touch with "The Chief", they are Olympian figures with human characteristics: a sort of board of management through whose malignity, indifference or incompetence the world's affairs have got out of hand. Ever since the scientific revolution, personified here by Francis Bacon, things have been going to the bad. In a last, nihilistic throw the Olympian powers send an agent whose mission it is to cast humanity loose. The management's attitude to life on earth is literally "to hell with it". We have no God and an overweening science – the echoes of Nietzsche and Faust are clear enough through the Olympians now chat about the Double Helix and DNA.

Getting to the birth and activation of the agent takes up the first, most satisfactory part of the book. As the plot is a contrivance of the Gods, so too are the characters, who symbolise every aspect of human nature. Max Delius and Onno Quist are friends. Max is an astronomer, Onno a philologist. Yet each also embodies his opposite. Max is a womanising hedonist as well as a disciplined scientist. Onno the offspring of a well-beeled family who despises money. "Like two mirrors reflecting one another", their complementarity is secured by the discovery that they were conceived on the same day. Max's parents are presented in similar contrapuntal fashion. His Jewish mother was deported to Auschwitz, his German-speaking father executed for collaboration in occupied Holland.

Given this Yin and Yang characterisation, it is a miracle that Mulisch tells us a story we want to read; but to begin with, he does. Max falls for Ada, a cellist, who leaves him for Onno, who loses her back to Max for a single act of water-borne coition. Its product is Quentin, the infant prodigy and unsuspecting agent of the celestial mis-managers. (Given that Ada makes haste to sleep with Onno, we cannot be too sure about this.)

The conception of Quentin takes place, symbolically, in Cuba in 1968. Yet the account of Max, Onno and Ada's stay in this paradise

that was to fail is as flat and dated as Onno's later experiences as a Dutch politician. The matter-of-fact language and lack of imaginative power contrast with the chapter in which Max visits Auschwitz – no novelty, either, but an event to which Mulisch brings genuinely fine writing and true emotional force: "Even in heaven eternal bliss would be possible only by the grace of a criminal loss of memory."

Themes of forgetting recur, sometimes naturally, more often by unskillful artifice. Ada vegetates for five years after a road accident following her return from Cuba and never recovers consciousness. Quentin is born, as befits his mission, by Caesarian section.

His appearance should bring a new ascent in our interest. Instead, it marks the onset of a slow decline. He is a beautiful, unearthly and cerebral child, yet fey, precocious children can be horribly tiresome. As slow to speak as Einstein (his first word is "obelisk"), he is given to uncanny insights, one of which inspires in Max a new theory of space and time. Space and time then turn against Max, who in an accident (and another break with the book's more naturalistic first half) is struck dead by a meteorite. This is a pity: Max is a sympathetic human agent in a novel whose feet are rapidly leaving the ground, and we miss him.

Quentin dreams of citadels, but his mission is irredeemably destructive. In a long adventure sequence straight from Tintin, he steals the tablets of Moses from the Lateran Chapel and takes them to Jerusalem. The stones crumble to nothing, leaving humanity adrift. Quentin returns in his spiritual home.

In the epilogue one of the Gods, deciding to leave things there, quotes Goethe's words: "Restriction shows the master's hand". Mulisch would have done well to apply them to himself. To say this novel is intellectually ambitious is an understatement. Instead of taking on heaven and earth, it should have restricted itself to the lower canvas. Transcendental messages come across more powerfully if they eschew the supernatural.

Here, the problem of unity of tone is not so much unresolved as scarcely tackled. One moment Mulisch is telling a story in plain, old-fashioned prose, the next he is laying on all manner of colours in startling acrylics. He makes claims to omniscience in more than the authorial sense, and there are many diverting ideas and instructive passages. However, much of his knowledge is thrown at us raw, with a surfeit of facts and theories and a deficiency of artistry.

A novel of this scope and length is destined to be greeted either as the millenarian work of Big Ideas we have all been waiting for, or as a pretentious failure. This is unfair, but the risk is inherent in the enterprise. A work purporting to give an all-embracing view of the human condition cannot be only partially successful.



The moment of truth: Mission Control registers the explosion of Challenger (visible on the monitor screen)

PHOTOGRAPH: PLANET EARTH

From Manhattan to Shangri-La

Richard Feynman: a life in science by John and Mary Gribbin, Viking, £18

Richard Feynman (1918-88) was to the second half of the century what Einstein was to the first: the perfect example of scientific genius. He is best known for his solution to the explosion of the space shuttle Challenger in 1986. Feynman discovered that the rubber seals on the solid fuel booster rockets leaked in conditions of extreme cold, thus releasing combustible liquid. Even worse, NASA's engineers had detected this fault but had been gagged by a cynical management, content to play Russian roulette with safety.

Such were the political pressures to find that the Challenger debacle had been an accident that Feynman had to struggle to get his views into the final report of the commission of enquiry. His appendix concludes that: "For a successful technology, reality must take precedence over public relations, for Nature cannot be fooled."

Feynman's solution was impressive on two counts. He was already seriously ill with cancer when he agreed to serve on the commission, and he was in his 68th year, or some 40

Frank McLynn explains the challenging career of a maverick

years past what is usually considered a great physicist's sell-by date. His undisputed claim to genius rests not just on the staggering originality he brought to scientific problems, but on his sustained versatility over decades.

Feynman was a leading light on the Manhattan Project that developed the atomic bomb in 1943-45; he won the 1965 Nobel Prize for his work on radiation theory; he pioneered the complex theory of weak nuclear force. He also revolutionised the study of quantum mechanics and worked out a new approach (quantum electrodynamics) that provided a model for the interaction of particles and their movement from one space-time point-instant to another. He developed the theory of superfluidity in liquid helium; he demonstrated that the proton and the neutron were not elementary

particles but were composed of more basic elements known as quarks and, in his fifties, he revolutionised the study of computers by his demonstration of parallel processing.

As a private personality, Feynman was a hedonist who liked to play bongos and frequent nightclubs. He was a lecturer for the gallery touch. In his later life he became obsessed with the Soviet republic of Tuva in Siberia, which figured in his imagination as an invented Shangri-La; he made it his lifetime's ambition to go there. But those were the days when Reagan had decreed that the Soviet Union was the evil empire. Years dragged by as Feynman's request was processed through the labyrinthine Soviet bureaucracy.

Finally, an official invitation arrived in California from the Soviet Academy of Sciences – four days after his death. Like Moses with the promised land, Feynman never got to Tuva. The project was fulfilled by the Joshua of the piece, Feynman's friend Ralph Leighton.

The salient elements in Feynman's life are well known. It cannot be said that the Gribbins add anything to our

knowledge, and in many respects their lacklustre account serves to diminish his stature. They are absurdly prissy about Feynman's notorious womanising which, in their account, becomes "enjoying the company of pretty girls", as if he were a stage-struck sophomore instead of a fairly ruthless man of the world. Their disastrous decision to alternate chapters on pure science with thumbnail sketches of their hero comes across as the merest amateurism – an impression not diluted by the Janet-and-John flavour of some of the scientific explication. The irony is that their "simple" explanations are not that good; Thomas Powers' biography of Heisenberg unravels the theory of nuclear fission more lucidly.

There is one good anecdote. Feynman hated all forms of pretension and detested the self-satisfied elitism of the IQ cultist group, Mensa. When asked to join Mensa he replied that he was not intelligent enough; apparently, at school his IQ had been assessed at 124. If that piece of evidence is not enough to finish off Hans Eysenck and his IQ buffs, nothing ever will.

Pseud ascending

James Hall traces the rise and rise of Marcel Duchamp, modern art's poker-faced court jester

Duchamp by Calvin Tomkins, Chatto, £25

The irresistible rise of Marcel Duchamp is a story of almost Forrest Gump proportions. A minor Cubist painter in Paris, Duchamp enjoyed fleeting notoriety in America with a painting called "Nude Descending a Staircase No 2" and, after he had given up painting, with a mass-produced urinal called "Fountain" (1917). Then he seemed to give up art altogether to play chess. He claimed he had run out of ideas. By the 1940s his name was forgotten by all but a small circle of admirers. During the 1960s, however, Duchamp was rediscovered by a new generation of artists and critics, and is now routinely regarded as the most important 20th-century artist.

Tom Hanks is unlikely to be queueing up to star in a biopic. As Calvin Tomkins shows in this first full-scale biography, Duchamp believed in the "beauty of indifference". He had many lovers, and two wives, but he seems to have been neutral about relationships. His insouciant charm – and his fascination with chess – were liabilities against intimacy.

An Italian critic has claimed that Duchamp had an incestuous passion for his sister Suzanne, but Tomkins gives a remarkably clean bill of health to his family relationships. His mother's deafness helped make her "placid and indifferent", but in general the family was mutually supportive. Duchamp's father was a well-to-do provincial notary. Even though four of his six children decided to become artists, he gave them all allowances which he scrupulously deducted from their future inheritance. There were no obvious Oedipal struggles here; Duchamp's father even came to Paris once a month to settle one son's restaurant bills.

The major turning-point in Marcel's career came with the New York Armory Show of 1913. This was the first big showing of avant-garde French art in America, and Duchamp's Futurist "Nude Descending a Staircase No 2" was the major *succès de scandale*. It is a lugubrious painting in which the movements of a naked figure down a flight of stairs are reduced to diagrammatic form. Nobody quite knows why it caused such a stir in America (in Europe it had been barely noticed) but the madly professional title is presumably what hit

home. Nudes were meant to be docile and user-friendly, not marauding sex-machines.

When Duchamp went to New York in 1915, he was already a celebrity. Tomkins gives a good account of how he enchanted the local media with his wry appreciation of America and ability to deliver urbane sound-bites. New York, he said, is itself "a complete work of art"; the only works of art America has created "are her plumbing and her bridges"; the American woman "is the most intelligent woman in the world today – the only one that always knows what she wants". He was the most penetrating and amusing European observer of the New World since Oscar Wilde.

Duchamp's most revolutionary works are his "ready-mades" – manufactured objects chosen seemingly at random and exhibited as art. He had already devised a couple of ready-mades before leaving France ("Bicycle Wheel" and "Bottle-Rack"), but they are now regarded as homages to America. The snow shovel and the urinal were bought from hardware stores in New York and suggest a delight in industrial commodities – and a corresponding disdain for anything hand-made.

Yet Duchamp did not revel in the modern to the exclusion of the old or archetypal. His early machine images never looked as modern as those of his Futurist-inspired contemporaries. His first machine image was a small painting of an old-fashioned coffee-mill: the kind of object that Chardin or William Morris might have appreciated. It is a device that satisfies all five senses – touch, sight, sound, smell, and eventually taste. Indeed, in the 1930s he even made a miniature replica of the urinal in terracotta.

This refusal to renounce a primal physical engagement with the world is what makes Duchamp's art so beguiling and enigmatic. In his best work, the sensual always vies with the clinical. This is the ethos behind his outrageous contention that he wanted to grasp things with the mind "the way the penis is grasped by the vagina". He speaks both as a lover and as a scientist.

Tomkins writes for the *New Yorker*, and he has done a very professional job. He has written about Duchamp since they became friends in the 1960s; not only is this book well researched, it is very readable. Readability is a rare commodity in Duchamp studies, so this is no mean feat. Nonetheless, in his determination not to be included in the "international tribe" of Duchamp-



"Nude Descending a Staircase No 2" PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART; © 1996 AHS, NEW YORK/ADAGE PARIS

polologists, Tomkins can sometimes seem a little superficial. He believes Duchamp has to be approached with a "light heart", everywhere he sees "lyricism" and "epic joy", rather than the usual pessimism. His determination to be upbeat leads him to some naive pronouncements. In the 1930s, he observes, the "buoyant optimism" of France "had been undermined by the worldwide Depression and also by the internal hatreds and conflicts that occasionally boil over and disrupt the surface *bonheur* of French life". Oh la la! This is the language of the package-tour guide.

Duchamp's own political views are dispensed with in a single sentence: "The conflicts

Melancholy baby

Carole Morin on Daddy's girl

The Kiss by Kathryn Harrison, Fourth Estate, £14.99

Women are allowed to take themselves seriously, whereas likeable lads have to stay self-deprecating if they want to be loved. Or so it seems if the autobiographies of pale English wimps like Richard Rayner and Nick Hornby are compared to the darker memoirs of such American babes as Elizabeth Wurtzel and Mary Karr. The female writers have more in common with the *watakushi shosei*, the Japanese "I-novel" – a distinct form that is neither fiction nor autobiography.

True to gender, novelist Kathryn Harrison's *The Kiss* follows in the melancholic footsteps of Uno Chiyo, rather than the life-affirming skip of nice-boy Nick. Given that her hook is about her affair with her preacher father, this is appropriate. Their incestuous relationship begins with a lecherous, wet kiss at an airport and ends when she decides to enrol at a creative-writing school.

Is the story true? In a voyeuristic culture, the notion of truth both attracts and repels the reader. By using a photograph of pubic hair on the cover, the publisher is manipulating this grotesque fascination. Harrison plays a similar game when describing a teenage trip to the gynaecologist to have her hymen broken at her mother's request. The doctor, a father figure, is mildly surprised, but carries out his task with a series of green dildos. "Their green is a green that exists nowhere in nature... One after another he inserts them."

"You couldn't make it up," is one response to this bizarre scene. Another is that literal truth is irrelevant. The plastic penises are an effective device to prove that Mom is a flakey baby; and a motivation for the narrator's affair with her father – a vengeful way of sexually humiliating her mother.

The idea that reality should be edited to make a story clearer and more compelling has been controversial since Picasso fell out with Gertrude Stein because she "lied" in the

Autobiography of Alice R. Toklas (an odd objection coming from a Cubist who invented reality in his art). But rearranging the seating plan at a Bohemian banquet – as Stein did – is different from claiming to have huffed your dad on the floor of his church, as Harrison does. Sex aids excepted, her story is generally restrained. Unfortunately, after the first kiss the momentum fizzles out, the way it does with adolescent infatuation.

Tales of child abuse are dull, familiar and sordid. Given this, Harrison doesn't do a bad job. Estranged from her father since her birth, she has only met him three times when their passionate romance begins. She is 20 and more of a consenting victim than a sophisticated but innocent Lolita.

Harrison's dignified intelligence and her dad's narcissism – symbolised by his obese body – contradict each other until she finally realises their incompatibility.

In the claustrophobic atmosphere of *The Kiss*, there is no room for flaws. A mistake, even a tiny detail, sticks out in a narrative as focused as this one. Our heroine's glamorous young mother spends "a fortune on a party dress for her, despite the fact that even the most determined shopper would find it impossible to spend a fortune in Laura Ashley. They should warn students in writing schools of the hazards of selecting the wrong brand name."

The Kiss is dedicated to Harrison's mother, who dies of cancer towards the end. Mom's death describes the incestuous *ménage-à-trois*, proving her suspicion that it was thwarted desire for her that motivated the relationship between her lost husband and bitter daughter.

The blame, by this time, is firmly on the head of the father. He is definitely guilty of being a bad dad, as well as being a crazy mixed-up preacher. However, the moral superiority of women – which allows them to forgive only each other – is as unattractive as a literary dénouement as in real life. After all, although they confused Dad with God during their obsession and made him the devil afterwards, he is just a man.

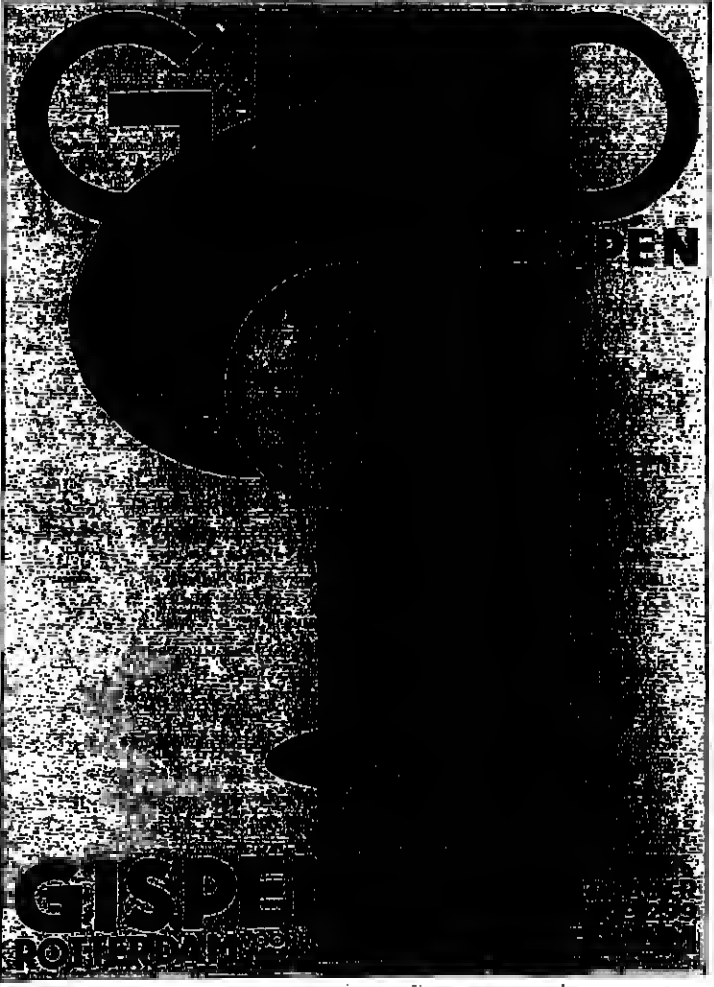
A week in books

Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday
Saturday
Sunday

It's a pretty safe bet that Sister Wendy Beckett will not be asked to write for Oxford's *History of Art* series, developed at a cost of £2m and now launched with titles on the photograph, 20th-century design, art in China, European art from 1700-1830 and art and society in Italy, 1350-1500. With her breathless enthusiasm and gossipy urge to get inside the heads of masters old and new, the toothy Carmelite probably embodies the OUP editors' worst nightmare. Elegantly designed, lavishly illustrated and keenly priced (at £8.99 per volume), their series has a clear intellectual agenda – beyond its commercial aim of knocking Thames & Hudson's rival *World of Art* library off its revolving pedestal at the head of the popular art-books market.

Oxford hopes to bring the so-called New Art History out of the seminar room and into the tote bags of gallery-goers everywhere. So exit the traditional canon, with its procession of great names, its rapt aesthetics rooted in idealist philosophy, and its cosy belief in the virtue of courts, patrons, salerooms and museums. In its place comes a fiercer orthodoxy, devoted to critical theory and social contexts, suspicious of the artist's genius and the spectator's pleasure, asking tough questions about just who got to paint, purchase and possess the objects of its scrutiny. Evelyn Welch, writing on the Quattrocento, tells you an awful lot about household structure in 15th-century Tuscany but manages only a couple of glancing references to Piero della Francesca. The Roundheads have taken over the museum. These days, they won't smash up the statues – but they might insist on some slightly sarky labels underneath.

In most cases, the benefits of the new puritanism outweigh its rather joyless tinge. Since Thames & Hudson have just re-issued Mary Tregear's *World of Art* volume on Chi-



From '20th Century Design' by Jonathan Woodham (OUP, £8.99)

nese Art, we can compare it head-to-head with Craig Clunas's *Art in China* for OUP. Clunas, I think, wins on nearly every count. Let's take one familiar example: the extraordinary Terracotta Army of life-sized clay soldiers buried with the Qin Emperor at Lintong in 210BC. Tregear waxes vaguely lyrical about the naturalism of figures that may portray "actual members of his bodyguard". But Clunas plants the tomb troops in much firmer historical soil, explaining why the army is "a triumph of bureaucracy as much as of art". The breathless rapture, he assumes, we can supply for ourselves.

Fair enough; but Oxford's editors should spare a thought for the unreconstructed Sister Wendy tendency. Many lay readers may still fancy a spot of uplift. Besides, the entire Oxford project pivots on a paradox – visually pleasurable books that challenge the idea of

Filling a need and an awful lot of holes

Geoff Dyer on the slick and the dead

The Undertaking by Thomas Lynch, Cape, £9.99

Much of what is interesting in this little book is reducible to the opening sentence of the first essay: "Every year I bury a couple hundred of my townspeople." Thomas Lynch is an undertaker, more specifically an undertaker who is also – as he modestly puts it – an "internationally unknown" poet. Dying, claimed Sylvia Plath, "is an art, like everything else", but for Lynch and his father it's a business – like anything else. The father kept asking Thomas when he was going to write a book about funerals and this is the task he has undertaken. We all have some idea of what lawyers get up to but most of us have had little chance of satisfying our curiosity about "the dismal trade".

Lynch is not the first to work this particular hustle. In his *Notes of an Anatomist*, specifically the essay on "The Dead as a Living", F. Gonzalez-Crussi wondered what effect his "death-related occupation" might have had upon his own personality. "Corpse handlers, like pathologists, morticians, or embalmers, are viewed with distrust," he notes. "An honest reply to the question of what one does for a living is bound to break the conviviality." Lynch, though, is nothing if not convivial, and has come up with his own solemn kind of conviviality. His style combines the vaguely archaic – "often-times", "assemblage" – with deim-ish slang: "Listen up", "go piss up a rope". The undertaker's job might oblige him to appear tunelessly grave, but that professional gravity exists in a specific world of cocaine problems (his brother's) and teenage suicides committed to a Kurt Cobain soundtrack.

Lynch's take on this world is at once nostalgic and unsentimental. Thus there seems to him, in his lifetime, "an inverse relationship between the size of the TV screen and the space we allow for the dead in our lives and landscapes". At the gas station, meanwhile, you can get "tamppons and toothpaste but no one comes out to check your oil, nor can the insomnia behind the

glass wall fix your brakes or change your wiper blades". Like that novelistic opening sentence these sharp observations are worthy of an on-form (it's been a while) Updike.

Lynch is less impressive when gnawing away at ethical issues like abortion, assisted suicide, capital punishment and what-not. The fact that he's in the business gives him an automatic authority, I suppose, but various versions of the same point – taking care of the dead is a way of caring for the living – emphasise that, when it comes to intimations of mortality, vocational training is of only limited value. Especially once the novelty of that tone of reverent jauntiness begins to pall.

Lynch would be a much funnier writer if he served up his puns deadpan instead of highlighting them: "Years back before the cremation market really – I can't help this one – heated up", "embalming got to be, forgive me, *de rigueur* during the Civil War"; "a cemetery/golf-course combo – a Golfatorium – seems, fetched only as far as, you will excuse, a nine iron". That cemetery-golf course riff goes on for pages and becomes less funny last drop of satirical juice out of the idea.

The best joke comes when Lynch observes that "the temptation to drop names, well known in the world of letters and epicures, is nearly unavoidable. But I was better raised than that." This is from a silly piece about "my friend the poet Matthew Sweeney" in which Lynch is keen to display his inside-track knowledge of London's eateries (Wagamama is "the ultimate noodle bar", apparently).

For sheer, ear-reddening embarrassment, however, you should turn not to the essay in which Lynch and his poet pal Don Paterson go for a curry hut to the piece about serendipity and contingency, otherwise known as the one about "my friend and editor, the poet Robin Robertson" (twice!) and "my friend and mentor, the poet Henry Nugent" (three times!). It's a benchmark piece: the first time a writer has undertaken the bold feat of giving his editor head in print.

A Perfect Execution

A compelling mixture of murder-mystery, Greek tragedy and love story

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

TIM BINDING

A brilliant, terrifying and haunting novel... all the packed action of a thriller with a vision remarkable for its breadth and for its humanity

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By Christopher Hirst and Emma Hagestadt

Last Night's Fun by Ciaran Carson (Pimlico, £10) "I could never understand how rock stars could drink whiskey and Coke; perhaps their appetites had been depraved by electricity." This learned, loquacious collection of bits and bobs is resolutely muscle-powered. Mainly a paean to traditional Irish music, it also includes disquisitions about roll-up fags, obscure brands of whiskey and the Irish breakfast, in particular fried eggs ("Mote is a crisp-edged man. Deidre's over-medium-hard, with a slightly liquid centre"). The book is cool entirely successful in its Joycean ambition to mirror a night of music, with each chapter named after a tune. But, like a raucous *celidh*, the result combines nostalgia, sentiment, wild coery and much laughter.

Acts of Revision by Martyn Bedford (Black Swan, £5.99) Gregory Lynn has oo stake in the adult world. "Orphao, bachelor and only child from the age of four and a half", he hides out in his mum's suburban semi living on fried eggs and Fanta, obsessed by childhood slights and miseries. Unhinged by his mother's death, he decides to seek out his secondary school teachers and give them a much-needed lesson in pain and humiliation. Told in a series of grisly vignettes, the novel describes the appropriate punishments Gregory metes out to his erstwhile tormentors. (Pity poor Mr Patrick who taught him the causes of the French Revolution.) *Grange Hill* meets *Seven* in this slick and funny first novel.

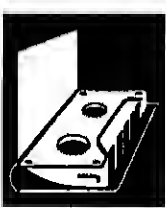
The Oxford Book of Nature Writing edited by Richard Mabey (OUP, £7.99) After sternly declaring "The pieces included in this text are all factual prose", it is unfortunate that the first choice commences: "Once upon a time there was a fierce war waged between the Birds and the Beasts..." But once Aesop is out of the way, nature reveals its incomparable superiority of invention compared to the weedy efforts of man. Mabey demonstrates how nature has consistently inspired tender, perceptive writing by both

scientists and *literati*. The poet William Cowper writes movingly about the different personalities in a family of hares he adopted, while biologist Niko Tinbergen notes that by marking wasps "they were transformed into acquaintances". This is one of the most readable and revealing of anthologies.

The Inklings by Humphrey Carpenter (HarperCollins, £8.99) Not to be confused with the vocal harmony group The Inkspots - though they were of much the same period - the Inklings were a weedy bunch of Oxford eggheads who liked nothing better than a oater about *Beowulf* while knocking back a noggin or two. They revolved round C S Lewis, J R R Tolkien and Charles Williams (who, unlike the other two, did not gain a vast readership for his cranky thrillers). Despite an unfortunate chapter devoted to an imaginary record of this dusty gang ("Well, Tollers, I still don't know how you keep up your story so magnificently. It hasn't flagged for a moment"), Carpenter's masterly portrait of intellectuals at play is unexpectedly entertaining. Whether their demanding company would be so enjoyable in the flesh is doubtful.

Appassionata by Jilly Cooper (Corgi, £6.99) Only Jilly Cooper could get away with a sexy blockbuster set among the stars of the international classical music circuit. Well, not sexy exactly, but definitely gap-toothed earthy. These pointy-bosomed flautists, big-bottomed sopranos and pig-tailed conductors don't sit about in hotel rooms practising their scales. They're out seducing the socks off each other, especially the book's heroine, Abigail Rosen, a highly strung violinist turned conductor who is prepared to sacrifice everything for a night of passion in an airport Hilton. Even though they have exchanged riding whips for batons and bows, Cooper's characters might just as well be mounting horses as podiums, but being the old pro that she is, it doesn't seem to matter.

Audiobooks



Nothing sums up the changed approach of the British to India more vividly than the different way Rudyard Kipling and Mark Tully tell plain tales from the hills. Kipling's *The Man Who Would Be King*

(ABM, 80mins, £6.99) is the story of the terrible fate of two "gentlemen at large" who set up as gods in the Hindu Kush. Read with bloodthirsty gusto by Richard Mitchley, I'd have been happier without the loopy *apologia pro radio vita sua* that prefaces Mark Tully's *The Heart of India* (Chivers, 7hrs 35mins, £35.95) but once it was over, Tully's skill in creating intimate tales from local triumphs and disasters in his adopted country of the Uttar Pradesh, read to his own inimitable voice, made this one of my favourite ever audio listens.

Christina Hardymont

The joys of housework given free expression in a Fifties advertising campaign run by Alcatraz Houseware: 'It's light! It's bright! and it's no longer with us'... PHOTOGRAPH: ADVERTISING ARCHIVES



Cooking's more fun in a gay kitchen

Clean round the bend

Biting the Dust: the joys of housework by Margaret Horsfield, Fourth Estate, £14.99

Ever found yourself waxing a floor at 2am, polishing a sink or cleaning the shower tiles with a toothpick in the aftermath of an emotional whirlwind? Far from being an unsexy subject, worth a desultory section in the most mind-numbing of mags, housework appears in Margaret Horsfield's delightful *Biting the Dust* as a subject closer to our hearts than we care to admit. "Whether we flap or scrub, the activities of cleaning often signify something quite apart from the business of chasing dirt," she argues; "womoe talk of the calming effect that cleaning has upon them, the virtuous radiance it sometimes imparts."

Of course, such remarks reflect a largely female perspective on the cleaning-thing, and one which was heartily pooch-pooched by such second-wave feminists as Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan. But Horsfield, a former contributor to *Woman's Hour*, bravely declares housework a veritable joy. As they haul their dirty secret out for a very public airing, the ladies of the chamois reveal that many women find

Julie Wheelwright encounters the women with irons in their souls

mundane domestic tasks soothing, cathartic or even pleasurable, while others pour invective on the subject. Whatever our politics, housework is deeply emotive. Many women among Horsfield's 100-plus interviewees confessed that they found cleaning akin to a religious observance. Molra massaged her kitchen floor with a variety of unguents while waiting to hear news of a critically ill brother; another fell into a frenzy of polishing the night before her son's funeral, while the author oiled a broken heart by scouring coffee mugs. For women, cleaning is the ultimate displacement activity.

Fireworks are also sparked by the depressing confirmation that even New Man has yet to discover the bog brush, and that women become their mothers when

mopping the floor. Panic attacks of housecleaning are still common before a mother sets foot in her daughter's home, no matter how high-powered her progeny. Horsfield admits to polishing cutlery, waxing a wooden chair and scraping the grease from cooker knobs before a recent maternal visit. "Why? Because my mother makes me feel like a lazy slut, though she would never say anything of the kind. But I know she suffers, often loudly, if a house is dirty. Such suffering makes me wince." Baby boomers, it seems, have yet to vanquish completely the postwar prescription that housework is women's work; the exclusive arena of female control and achievement. Feminist thinkers have written of the way in which childcare still maintains women as the power in the home; so does cleaning. Depressingly, recent statistics find that women still do at least twice as much housework as men.

Attempts to share the job usually end in a dirty war between the sexes. Soon after twentysomethings Danielle and Bill were wed, arguments about housework tarnished their romance. "He's so much worse than I realised and it puts such a

strain on our relationship," says Danielle, who now refuses to wash her husband's dishes, which gather in greasy piles astride the kitchen sink. Trudi, a veteran of two marriages, found that both her spouses would clean sporadically but never take on the "dull, boring, tedious stuff". Horsfield advocates giving up and hiring help. Cleaners, too, have their part in the story. Working as a professional maid at a Scottish hotel, Horsfield came to admire the head house-cleaner Alice, for "her unflinching ability to control our boss". Cleaners emerge in anecdote, from a tangle of historic cleaning manuals, and from the professionals' own experience, as potent figures with the power to dominate lesser mortals. Horsfield has rooted out a whole new branch of inquiry for cultural scholars. The fascinating chapters on maternal mentors and on men's aversion to cleaning especially cry out for further investigation. Horsfield also treats the line between rigorous research and entertaining narrative with a fine grace, with feeling and an acerbic wit. And now, if you'll excuse me, I've got a lampshade that's just screaming to be hoovered.

Independent choice: kitchen culture

By Jane Jakeman

What don't just eat; we use food to demonstrate our style, beliefs and identity. A new crop of books displays the range of current trends: Green Eating, Tuscan Peasant, Scholarly, Country House and Dinner-Party Chic.

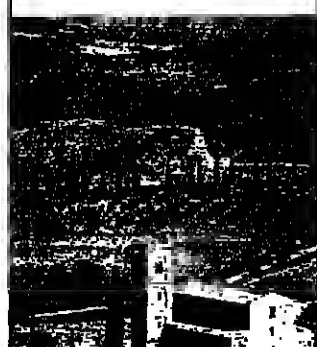
I once tried shopping in a remote Lincolnshire village surrounded by vast acres of prime soil all bursting with veggies. The local shop had some spindly blotched carrots that could have seen service in *The Hand of Dracula* and some pensionable onions. The vitamin-filled fresh local produce was all destined for distant supermarkets. So I need oo convincing that the most important food issue, the fundamental quality of what we eat, is raised by Kate de Selincourt's *Local Harvest: Delicious Ways to save the Planet* (Lawrence & Wishart, £11.99).

Her book exposes horrors such as supermarket Chickoo Kiev: "made largely from reconstituted, mashed chicken skin with fragments of muscle meat" and the dishonest labelling which permits Danish bacon to appear as "British", or the RSPCA's Freedom Foods guidelines, which allow sows to be kept in savagely cruel farrowing crates and battery hens to be debarked. This book passionately argues that eating local organically farmed produce is tastier, kinder and healthier.

How could ooe oot agree? But the quality of documentation is poor, sometimes irresponsibly so: the claimed statistical connection between the incidence of breast cancer and the use of the pesticide lindaxee will arouse much concern, yet oo citations are given. And she does not really tackle the related problems of delivery and cost of organic produce. Those who oeed cheap fresh food most, poor inner-city families, cannot afford the price, the transport or the time needed to purchase it. It looks as if the main beneficiaries of organic farming are represented by the Volvos full of Pick-Your-Own hunting round country lanes. Still, we must overestimate the power of gesture, as the popularity of Swampy demonstrates. The most fashionable claim you can make in current foodie circles is to know a teenager up a tree.

The ever-popular Tuscan Peasant category is represented by *Walking and Eating in Tuscany and Umbria* (Penguin, £8.99), which combines the pleasurable genres of travel and food writing. James Lasdun and Pia Davis ventured off the beateo track to hoof it through Chianti. The book suggests more than 30 fairly undemanding walks, with eating places, around Florence, Lucca, Siena and other staging-posts on the art trail. I was glad to see a recommendation for Florence's *Mercato Centrale* - a wonderful culinary shopping scenario, as deserving of attention as the Duomo. The book is a treat for the armchair gourmet - how can one resist the cloisters of Moote Oliveto, which sport a medieval fresco by the little-known artist

Walking and Eating in TUSCANY AND UMBRIA
JAMES LASDUN AND PIA DAVIS



Pick of the week
Walking and Eating in Tuscany and Umbria

and badger-lover, Il Sodoma? The monks are renowned for their olive oil.

Here all roads lead to obscure rustic *alberghi* which would otherwise go undiscovered and the authors have a New York toughness in assessing food standards and prices. I started this book with extreme anti-pseud prejudice, but it ended up as my favourite. I was too over by mouthwatering details: little Fienza cheeses rolled in herbs and crushed peppers, pigeon-stock sauces flavoured with truffles - and by the refreshing emphasis on taking buses.

I turned in some dread to the scholarly offering. *The Official Foodie Handbook* once nailed the scholar-cook to the wall, as one whose days were spent transcribing phrases such as "splatte tharte pyke" from dusty manuscripts while existing on a diet of dyed kippers and biscuits. Happily, John Evelyn, Cook (Prospect Books, £25.50) is the work of the late, lamented, and

utterly credible, Christopher Driver.

It contains more than 300 recipes from Evelyn's 17th-century manuscript "receipt" book, lucidly edited, to which Driver has added a loving glossary which includes an intriguing contribution from Elizabeth David on *cantimplora*, an early device for cooling wine. But Evelyn was oo Peppy; he was a dry stylist and this book is a case where the modern editor was a better writer than his source. Historically inclined foodies will also enjoy Christina Hardymont's *Behind the Scenes: Domestic Arrangements in Historic Houses* (The National Trust, £24.99). This is the forgotten aspect of Country House cuisine, its below-stairs preparation. The book is meticulously researched, focusing on the kitchen and commissariat staff. It is lavishly illustrated, though the photographs show the preternaturally clean and tidy domestic scenarios of National Trust kitchens. Couldn't they have dirtied them up a bit? But if you want to know exactly how a Victorian dairy operated, Hardymont will tell you - and she has probably crawled inside the churns. Mrs Bridges with balls.

Finally, the latest and most gruesome example of Dinner-Party Chic, *Last Dinner on the Titanic*, Menus and Recipes from the Great Liner by Rick Archibald and Dana McCauley (Weidenfeld, £9.99). Not only the recipes that were served to the doomed passengers, but "suggestions oo setting the mood, decorating the table and preserving each dish" to evoke the ambience. Highly topical: one for Tory tables.

Gross natural products

Richard Davenport-Hines defines the yuck factor

For William Ian Miller, who is an American professor of law, disgust is a "marvellously promiscuous and obnoxious emotion, at once vigorous, familiar, strange and estranging. The preoccupation with self-interest in modern western political thought and the pathologising of sexuality in the 20th century have, he argues, made us forget how many of an individual's life choices are determined by revulsion."

Miller examines how ethical judgements invoke the idiom of disgust in such phrases as "What revolting behaviour!" He recalls that early Christians thought of "sin and hell as raising excremental stenches and loathsome prospects". Disgust, he concludes, ranks as a more important emotion than envy, jealousy, anger, fear, regret, guilt, sorrow, grief or shame because it "installs large chunks of the moral world right at the core of our identity, seamlessly uniting body and soul."

He insists that Montaigne, La Rochefoucauld and Robert Burton's 17th-century *Anatomy of Melancholy* are more eloquent about human motives than the mean, cheap reductive narratives of psychoanalysis. Unfortunately, Miller cannot rival Burton as a stylist or in the vivid superabundance of his anecdotes.

Generally, Miller's anecdotes are sparse, over-abstract and fussy. His stories - of St Catherine of Siena in 1370 inhaling and sucking the suppurating breast cancer sores of a fellow owo as an act of self-mortification, Charles Darwin's disgust when a native of Tierra del Fuego touches his food, and the revelation of a white New Yorker in 1852 when Antigians try to shake his hand - lack the rich plenitude of Burton's anecdote. Nor, except in Catherine's case, are they repulsive

The Anatomy of Disgust
by William Ian Miller,
Harvard University Press, £16.50

enough. The Victorian explorer John Speke's taste for eating the embryos of pregnant animals he had killed, and the disgust of his African huntsman at this contempt for fertility, is not mentioned by Miller but is exactly the kind of authentically disgusting anecdote he should have deployed more often.

Miller's generalisations about food, vomit and shit can be delightfully provocative. As disgust

He has a lively discussion on the effect of working-class Lancashire smells on George Orwell

is a sensory expression of aversion, he associates it with misanthropy. Though he has a lively discussion of the effect of working-class Lancashire smells on George Orwell, Miller is too genteel in his literary tastes. It is trivial, if not lazy, to dismiss Genet and Bataille as poseurs seeking only "cheap thrills". His praise of Orwell as "the 20th century's real poet of disgust" is soiled by his ignorance of Paul Bowles, ooe of the supreme poets of disgust of any century.

And Miller is too earnest about sex to make much sense of it. Orgasm he treats as humiliating. "Semeo is of all sex-linked disgust

substances the most revolting to meo... because it appears under conditions that are dignity-destroying." Most men's experience of semen comes from the cheerful sterility of a good wank, but Miller seems to have forgotten what this is like: "The horror of semeo is that it has the power to feminize... because it is sexual, fertilizing and reproductive."

Too often his personal attitudes are disguised in the armour and accoutrements of a general critique. He understands the power of cultural determinants of disgust, without realising how eccentrically personal his judgements are. Miller analyses at length the "contaminating" effect of a tattooed builder with jeans "worn low so that when he bent over his rear fissure (oh, the trials of decorum!) was exposed". The most ludicrous moment comes when Miller's wife, in a T-shirt with the slogan "save endangered mammals", meets the builder wearing a T-shirt of his own, which has "crack kills" inscribed beneath a cartoon of a human being crushed between the cheeks of a naked backside.

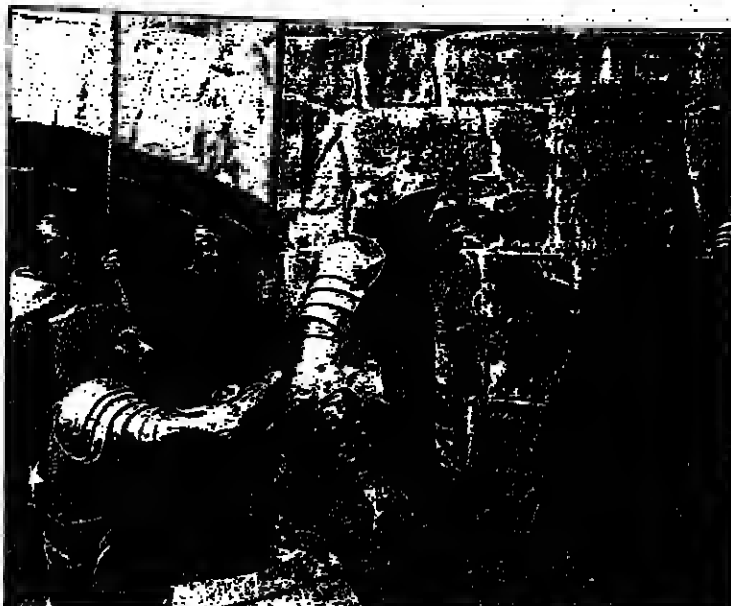
Arguably more disgusting than sartorially challenged builders are parents who find transcendent meaning in the potty-training of their children and insist on sharing every moment of the revelation. "Changing diapers," Miller announces, "is emblematic of the unconditional quality of nurturing parental love." He publishes his own experiences of toilet training with a lack of restraint for which his children may not thank him. His daughter "felt such a revulsion to faeces... that she refused to wipe herself for fear of contaminating her hood", while his son "not only removed underpants but the pants over them if one drop of urine dripped out after he went to the bathroom". *Chacun a son degout*.

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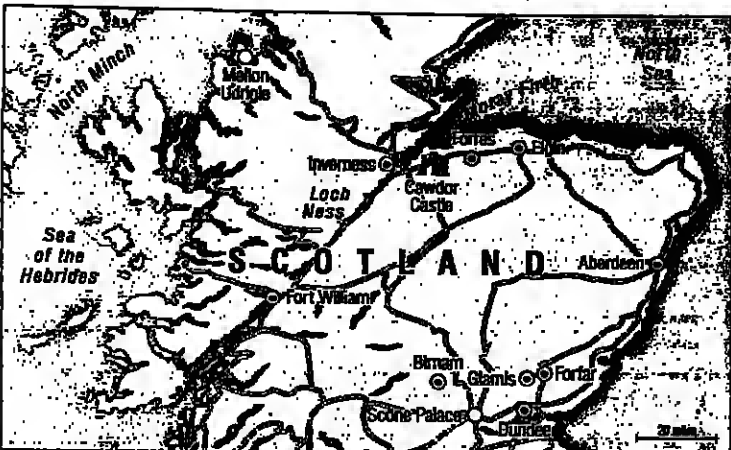
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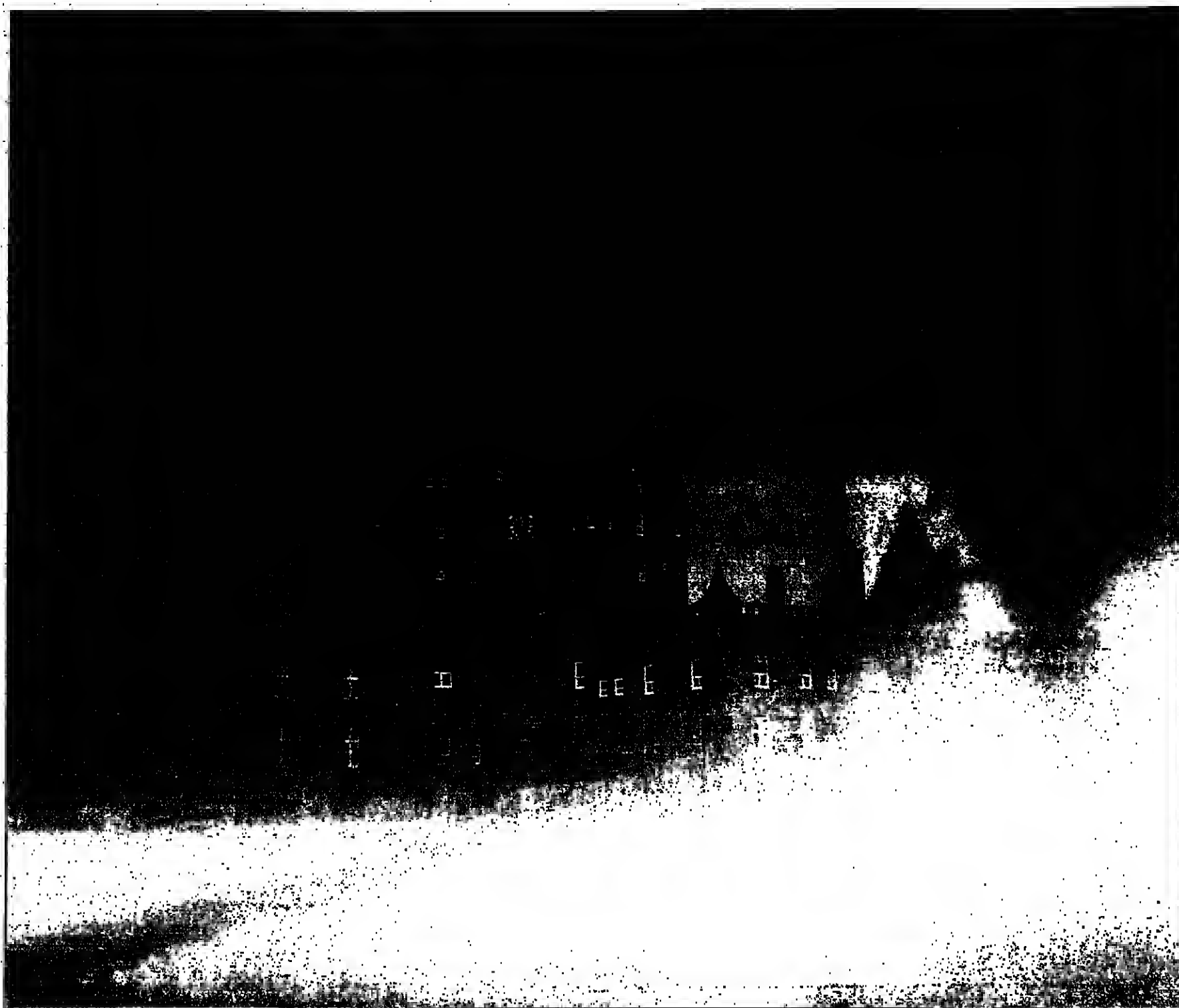
On the trail of Disney in
Paris, Florida - and
Lincolnshire.....12/13
What are the realities of a
ban on hunting.....16/17



Above: Polanski's interpretation of 'Macbeth'. Right: the dramatic setting of Glamis Castle
PHOTOS: TOR KOBAL; RIGHT: STIRRELL MOVING



From the heart of the Highlands to Scotland's west coast, history and mystery merge. Stephen Walsh and Amanda Williams unravel the route of Macbeth, while Andrew Marr braves a rugged, liquid landscape



Is this a quest I see before me?

We knew not to expect too much of the Elgin weather. As we drove past Cawdor Castle, just 10 miles up the road, the sky lit up electrically. So before you could say "when shall we three meet again" we were turning off, making our way through thunder, lightning and rain, in search of Macbeth.

Why start at Cawdor? Those whose familiarity with Shakespeare's play has endured beyond their hasty departure from the GCSE exam room will know that Macbeth, already Thane of Glamis, is rewarded by King Duncan with the thaneship of Cawdor after defeating the treacherous incumbent and his Norwegian allies. Since it is the witches - the Weird Sisters - who pass the word on that this bit of good fortune is at hand, we were ready for some spooky, Dark Age atmospherics.

Disappointment followed. Even in the storm, Cawdor Castle had a mellow exterior set in lush gardens, with a maze and impeccable floral displays. It isn't even a battlemented wreck; it has pretty, stepping-stone gable-ends and a perfect set of storm-resistant sash windows. It is rather lovely, which was all well and good, but not exactly evocative of murderous happenings. Finding the interior similarly comfortable - plenty of pretty tapestry and furniture, but precious little in the dungeon department - we began to wonder whether we were in the right place.

In the gift shop we searched in vain for Macbeth-y gifts. (Is this a dagger which I see before me? No, it's a genuine sheep's wool belly-button warmer.) A browse through the bookshop revealed that the place was selling itself on its Macbeth associations, but subtly: the castle, said the blurb, was "romantically linked by Shakespeare with Macbeth". A short trawl through the history books on the shelves revealed how romantically: the real King Macbeth's date of birth was about 1005; the castle came into being some 500 years later.

Oh well, we told ourselves, there's always tomorrow. (And tomorrow and tomorrow... In the wind and the rain the heathland around Forres - the supposed location for the meeting with the witches, according to Act 1, Scene 3 - was more convincing. In the town itself we came across the ancient bit of glass-encased masonry called Sueno's Stone, and since in Act 1, Scene 1, Sueno is named as head Norwegian, we felt on track.

We headed down the A9 for a quick run round Scone Palace, ancient coronation place of the Scottish kings, before setting off up the A94 towards Forfar and Glamis.

The approach to Glamis was everything we wanted. Pine forests accumulating in the rolling Angus countryside; the mile-long road to Glamis Castle, with five-storey, turreted towers glimpsed precipitately in the distance... Surely here was a place where dark deeds had been done. But again, the plot fell flat. Magnificent rooms, sure enough, and dramatic sights, but not the right drama. The only echo of Macbeth lay in a pair of weird sisters, Americans on a cultural-voluntarist bus-tour: "This is the most comfortable castle we've seen," they told us.

Just as comfortable as Cawdor, in other words, and just as fatally flawed in the contemporaneity department (400 years too late for Macbeth this time). With commendable honesty - or perhaps commercial sense - the castle tours focused on extant or perhaps historical ones, with photographs from the Queen Mother's childhood adorning the exhibition room.

Discouraged, we stopped the night in a horrible camping and caravanning club site in Scone; horrible because the site warden, like youth hostel administrators of old, kept a moral rein on their customers' behaviour, and movement is verboten after

11pm. We defiantly burned the midnight oil, pouring the whisky and poring over the text. We resolved to give Shakespeare one more chance. Deciding that if our tour were to have a satisfactory deouement we would find it in Act V, we read through to the end. In spite of his dirty deeds, we recalled, Macbeth would be safe unless Birnam Wood - aka the English in camouflage, as it turns out - came to high Dunsinane Hill.

A search through the gazetteer found Dunsinane, back in the direction of Forfar, the road didn't reach the hill there, but we struggled along a path, climbed a small mound and ticked it off.

Birnam, twinned with Dunkeld by BR, was easier to locate. We arrived there thinking only of glancing at a tree or two, calling it a day and pronouncing the journey a failure. But at Birnam we got answers as well as trees. In a shopping mall selling whisky marmalade, boozey liqueurs and See You Jimmy hats, a three-quid sound-and-light show called the Macbeth Experience made sense of the whole murky saga.

The answer lay in the bits of our copy we'd skipped: the appendix with the sources of the play. As the Macbeth Expe-

rience explained, Shakespeare worked from a history book called *Holinshed's Chronicles*, and Holinshed's 15th-century version of the Scottish past made use of poetic licence on a scale even the Bard couldn't match. It was from Holinshed that Shakespeare received the false notion that King Macbeth was at Glamis and at Cawdor. Worse, he had also picked up the idea that Macbeth was bloody and barbarous, which provided the basis for centuries of popular distortion.

It was a bit humbling to be put in the picture by something as profoundly unliterary as the Macbeth Experience. After a tourist promo video for Perthshire - golf courses and battlements, mainly - we got the detailed gen. Macbeth, born in 1005, tried to take his rightful place as heir in a complicated succession pattern. Duncan, however saintly in Shakespeare's play, not only jumped the queue but was a bloody king, too; hence the fact that Macbeth killed him off. Macbeth then ruled for 17 years - which were peaceful enough for him to make a pilgrimage to Rome in 1050.

At the close of the exhibition Macbeth was put in a line of succession of Scottish heroes who have striven against the Eng-

lish. Macbeth himself, "the last great king of Scotland", Robert the Bruce and "Braveheart" Wallace, scourges of various King Edwards; Bonnie Prince Charlie, doomed romantic, and the SNP. "We've had some complaints about the last one," said the girl who let us out. "But only from English visitors." It seemed a fair enough line of succession to our party, made up of one from each side of the border, and it was hard historical fact compared with our itinerary which, we realised, was based on a great deal of fantasy. Yet in following Shakespeare, at least we were in pretty high-class footsteps as far as invention was concerned.

Cawdor Castle (01667 404615), off the A96 between Nairn and Inverness, is open daily 1 May-12 October, 10am-5.30pm; adults £5, children £2.70, concessions £4. Glamis Castle (01307 840242), about 10 miles north of Dundee, is also open daily - until 6 October, 10am-5.30pm; adults £5, children £2.60, concessions £3. The Macbeth Experience at Birnam (01738 787696) is open daily all year round, 9.30am-7pm (April-October, 9am-5pm); adults £2, concessions £1.50.

SCOTTISH DEPARTURES

Individual fares on ScotRail services are high (£11.90 for the 34-mile stretch from Edinburgh to Aviemore, for example), so an unlimited travel deal is strongly recommended. Cheapest is the Festival Cities Rover, which allows you to travel between Glasgow, Edinburgh and Stirling, with extensions around Fife and to North Berwick. It is valid for any three days' travel in a week, and costs £25.

The ScotRail Rover covers the entire network. The options are: £62 for any four days out of eight; £90 for eight consecutive days; £118 for 12 days out of 15. Only slightly more expensive is the Freedom of Scotland Travelpass, which includes free use of Caledonian MacBrayne ferries. For eight consecutive days the cost is £99, and longer periods are available. More details from National Rail Inquiries on 0845 484950.

Cycling through
The journey from Carlisle to Inverness is covered by two maps (7b and 7c) in the National Cycle Network series, published by Footprint and available from cycle stores or direct from Sustrans (0117-926 8893).

Cruise the Caledonian Canal
Join a voyage aboard *Fingal of Caledonia*, a 126-foot, 130-ton barge which will be traversing northern Scotland through the summer. The canal links Inverness to Fort William, and includes patches of open water such as Loch Ness. The voyage lasts six days, with options for hiking, cycling and canoeing. The price is in the range £300 to £400, including all meals, through Caledonian Discovery (01387 772167).

Walking across
Scotland's coast-to-coast footpath is the 212-mile Southern Upland Way, which traverses the south of the country from Fortpatrick near Stranraer to Cockburnspath near Berwick. Details from the Ranger Service of Scottish Borders Council (01835 830281) for details of the eastern portion, or the Dumfries & Galloway Council on 01387 261234.



Obinan Croft: "the last house by the shore"

Paradise in a rainstorm

For those who make the journey to wet, wind-swept Wester Ross the rewards lie in a feast for the eye matched only by the promise of the menus. By Andrew Marr

There is a trick that Wester Ross plays. Just as you are driving back up and east across Scotland, leaving the long sea-lochs and weaving through the mountains, you take a last look back and see an explosion of colour.

The water turns emerald and purple-blue, there are detonations of yellow and scarlet on the hillsides, and small white houses with luridly painted, corrugated-iron roofs appear from the shadows. All of this is a trick, a surprise, because until you were just about to leave - it was raining.

Other parts of Britain may face hosepipe bans and parched river beds as a result of global climate change, but Wester Ross, like most of the rest of the Western Scottish Highlands, will be forever damp. While London sweated its way through the Easter break, we were squelching in welly boots, bent double in

waterproofs, through raw wind and horizontal rain.

And it was wonderful. Wester Ross is not for sun-worshippers or easily bored urban Channel-hoppers. Its awesome mountains and extraordinary vistas, which make all those Victorian eograpers and School-of-Landscape painters look like photo-realists, are well protected from the rest of Britain - by distance, most obviously, but also by climate. In winter, the days are short. The wind rarely dies. Colour sinks and disappears. Summers can produce sudden hot spells, but also bring the midges. Spring and autumn are the best times, but they are out... well, predictably good.

And all this is a blessing, if well disguised in sheets of rain: many years ago I remember hearing from a German tourist on a fine Wester Ross beach, with sun-bathing down on the flour-white sand,

that once people at home heard about it, this Scottish coast would be "covered with hotels, like Spain".

They were never built: too rainy for mass tourism. So those people who do come, taking the train and bus, or flying to Inverness and driving, rent cottages or stay in bed-and-breakfast places.

Once, not so long ago, Highland guest houses tended to be pretty poor: nylon sheets, fried eggs and beans for breakfast, a pervasive smell of cigarettes in the lounge. Today, though, there is a little flowering of genuinely good small hotels and guest houses. This is important: you need warm and comforting rooms, and excellent food, to recover from a cold day on the hills, or from fishing. We found, in a corner of Wester Ross we know well, a croft house offering sumptuous breakfasts - local kippers, duck eggs, griddle scones -

roaring open fires, and excellent dinners, including venison, trout, wonderful Scottish cheeses and a boggling sequence of puddings.

It was a good Scottish welcome, though Mairi and Roger Beeson are typical of many modern Highlanders: they met in a London advertising agency and moved north only recently. Their Obinan Croft ("the last house by the shore") is near Mellon Udrigle beach and looks out at a vast sweep of sea, the Summer Isles and the Sutherland mountains. We left after four nights, well blown about and rain-washed, but also seriously distended. For those prepared to take a short flight from London, and fed up with France, it's worth looking north.

Roger and Mairi Beeson can be contacted at Obinan Croft, Laide, Achnasheen, Wester Ross IV22 2NU (01445731548).

WORLD COVER
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At the start of Sunday's Marathon, runners will flash past some of London's most colourfully off-beat sites. Jane Furnival offers a guide



On the run. Far left: detail from a gate railing outside the British and Foreign Seaman's Society in Limehouse. Left: further down the track, the Birdkeeper's Cottage in St James Park. Below: Prestons Rd, where the Canary Wharf ventilation shaft emerges from the Jubilee Line extension. Below left: the Queen of the Isle on Manchester Road

PHOTOGRAPHS: KALPESH LATHIA

More than just a running track ...

If Marathon runners raise their eyes from the road, they will find some of London's most fascinating secrets along their 26.2-mile route from Blackheath to The Mall.

For slackers, strollers and strayers, here is our guide to everything more exciting than tarmac along the beaten track. If you follow the race on Sunday, remember that it starts at 9am, and roads along the way will be closed to cars at times.

There are three starts to the Marathon course, all on the edge of Blackheath, London's original high-crime area, haunted by 18th-century highwaymen such as Dick Turpin. The fastest runners take off from a shot along Shooters Hill Road, once the site of artillery practice. Worth a detour is the Pagoda, Elliot Vale, built in 1760 and the scene of Fergie-style frolics by Princess Caroline during her separation from the Prince Regent. Nosey neighbours' accusations of sex marathons with war hero Sir Sidney Smith among others led to a Delicate Investigation by a Royal Commission in 1806. Caroline celebrated her acquittal with a Mediterranean cruise during which she openly slept on deck with her servant, "Count" Pergami.

Back to the modern Marathon. Mass-start runners make their way to Charlton Road past A Gambardella, High Class Refreshments and Sweet Shop, founded by Andrew Gambardella 70 years ago after he arrived from Amalfi, aged 14.

The topiary archway to the former council house No 12 Charlton Park Road wouldn't disgrace Hampton Court. It was created by the late John Clarke 27 years ago. The older runners start in a quiet street passing the Church of St John the Evangelist, Stratheden Road. The congregation will mumble Marathon prayers for runners at

8am, 10.30am and 6.30pm on Sunday in this Gothic revival gem. In 1853, the Angerstein family picked up the £16,000 tab for the church in the hope that their eldest son would be its first incumbent. Canon Marshall pipped him to the post. His 26-year-old daughter was massacred in the Chinese Boxer Rebellion and has a memorial hall nearby.

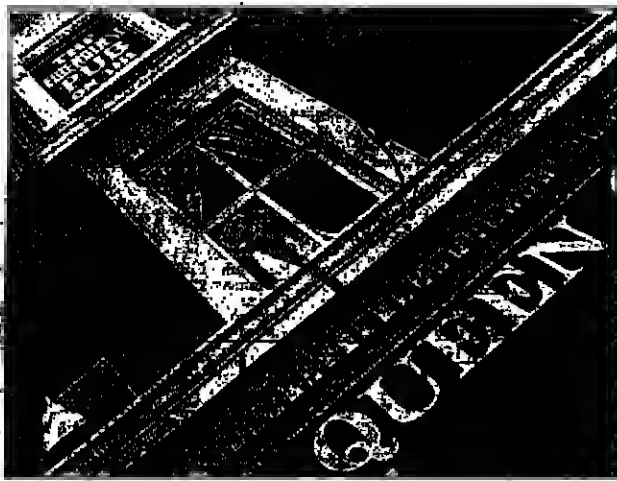
Onwards through Woolwich. Eyes left at Depository Road for the rare traffic sign "soldiers marching" near the palatial Woolwich Barracks, home of the Royal Artillery, built in 1758. Their museum is open from 1pm to 4pm, weekdays only, but meander round outside to see the railway gun (made to move on rails) and a Bloodhead Rocket, an airfield defence from the Fifties.

Brave the traffic by Connaught Mews off Grand Depot Road to admire the sun glinting off the golden painting of St George atop the Byzantine ruins of St George's Church. Built as a thanksgiving for our Napoleonic victories, this architectural diamond in the dust was wrecked by a flying bomb on 13 July 1944.

Further along, past the sadly dry fountain and pepperpot towers of the Thirties Woolwich Coronet, you glimpse the river, a futuristic landscape of power stations, steam puffing from silvery chimneys and planes leaving London City airport. Turn off to Leda Road for a prettier riverside walk. Or deviate off Woolwich Road to the Thames Flood Barrier, with a visitors' centre more interesting than it sounds.

You can take a short cut to the Marathon course on the other side of the river via the Woolwich Ferry, created in 1889 and now of Stalinist-workers-style concrete construction. One ferry only operates on Sunday, from 11.30am when roads re-open to traffic.

But if you continue along Woolwich Road into Green-



wich, stop to gawp at the plaster busts of Zeus in Chapman Antiques, next to Fingal Street. Or you can buy a dis-embodied plaster nose for a fiver. Virtually opposite is O'Hagan's Sausage Shop, winner of the 1996 Banger Awards for sausages with "no artificial anything".

Coming into Trafalgar Road, as you pass Christ-

church Way, crane your neck for a look at Nos two and three, which boast early insurance signs dated 1695, with painted lions to indicate to firemen that the occupants had paid for protection.

Before you reach the beautiful sweep of Greenwich's Maritime Museum, peep at the fine white stucco frontages of Nos 97-111 Old Woolwich

Road. This area's prosperity depended on a special sand mined only from the Woolwich Thames, which prevented iron in clay bricks from reddening. The Queen's House is the scene of (allegedly) one of the most clearly photographed ghosts ever. A hooded, caped figure extends a bony hand as it creeps up the circular staircase.

If you want to stop, the Fan Museum at 12 Crooms Hill is a Loo of the Year award-winner. For fans of second-hand stuff, the Junk Box, 151 Trafalgar Road, will provide lovable old tat for less than £5.

Next to the famous tea clipper Cutty Sark, another chance to cross to the Isle of Dogs via the Greenwich foot tunnel, opened in 1902 for

the benefit of workers commuting in the docks.

Move into Deptford. A hit of a right-on area, this Malcom's Up the Creek Comedy Club has proper funny men and four spots available on Sunday night to impromptu joke-tellers. £30-11pm on Sunday, £6 entry fee.

Budding Miss Marples will want to deviate off Creek

Road to find two mouldering skulls, signifying Tudor skull-duggery, at St Nicholas Church, Deptford Green. Here lies the unmarked grave of Kit Marlowe, playwright, murdered on 30 May, 1593. Perhaps en route to Holland to escape an investigation into atheism, Marlowe was stabbed in a drunken quarrel. Killer Ingram Frezer, a servant of spymaster Walsingham, used a 12d dagger and was pardoned four weeks later.

If only Marlowe had known of FA Albin, of 52 Culling Road, off Evelyn Street at the Rotherhithe section of the Marathon route. For £17,500 they will fly you, freeze packed, to store at -197 F in Michigan.

The Rotherhithe section of Evelyn Street inflicts poorly painted street art on its residents. Find a cruelly daubed pub called Loony Toons. Look high. Through the paint, you can just trace its original name, the Harp of Erin, carved in pretty stonework.

Just past the 1903 Fire Station, crane your neck into Blackhorse Road to see a bright hloe corrugated gardeo shed, painted with a mural of a clothes line. Opposite the Pepys Estate is a photomural representing a loo queue, called *Waiting To Go, Go, Go*, by Sue Evans, 1994.

Roger Mills ran the Paris marathon last week. How does it compare with London's?

Frowning by numbers

About eight kilometres into last Saturday's Paris marathon I saw an elegant, fifty-something woman trying to cross the road. She knew she faced a major wait: 22,000 closely packed runners make a formidable obstacle. "C'est pas possible," I heard her muttering bitterly as I went past.

Parisians aren't terribly interested in their marathon. Most of them don't even know it is happening, and the few hundreds who turn out to watch mostly look on in bemused silence. You get the odd pocket of support - the French fire service, who man a series of water points along the way, cheer you along energetically. But po-facedness is the norm.

In Paris there aren't any "fun" runners as there are in London - the bizarre collection of wannabe eccentrics that makes the run look like 20 circuses suffering a catastrophic scheduling coincidence. In the first mile of the London race last year I saw a mummy, a Roman centurion, three rhinos and a man dressed as a carrot. The carrot, annoyingly, overtook me later. All I saw by way of comparison in Paris were a husband and wife team self-consciously sporting Mickey Mouse ears, and a man in a jester's cap.

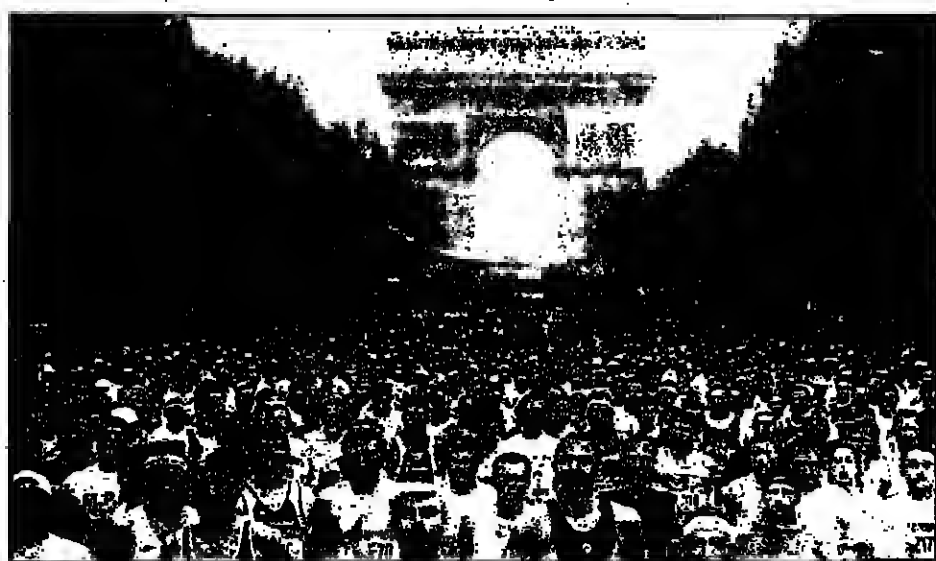
The London marathon is a 26-mile carnival. Every pub has a band or a sound system pumping out morale-inflating music. Big crowds flank many parts of the route, generating what feels like stadium decibel

levels. Lines of children hold out their hands wanting you to touch them as you run by. Again and again you come across spectators who, although they have no official connection with the race, have set up tables of food and drinks for any runner who wants them. If the election campaign leaves you feeling that human nature is in a state of irreparable decay, a visit to tomorrow's London marathon will be a powerful antidote.

The Paris run may lack this spirit. But there are compensations. The marathon route is stunning. You start at the top of the Champs Elysees and then progress through the heart of the city past the Tuilleries, the Louvre and down to the river for a mile or so before wheeling left to the Place de la Bastille. Where you are running is normally a gridlocked nightmare, and that, plus the fact that this is the sort of route taken by presidential cavalcades, gives you a delicious sense of trespassing.

The Paris route is good for discoveries, too - how many visitors ever visit the eastern Bois de Vincennes (miles of woodland, a zoo and an imposing chateau), or spend much time in the Bois de Boulogne? - though tourism doesn't have to be this painful.

Would I do the Paris run again? I don't think so. Marathon running is hard work and the atmosphere you run in makes all the difference. I'd go for the carnival every time.



The Paris marathon may lack spirit - but there are compensations

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Simon Calder

Click. Then a small, tinny cough. 'Due to train failure the 23.36 has been cancelled'

Last week, as Michael Williams reported in *The Independent*, the last British Rail trains departed for oblivion. All rail operations are now in private hands.

Clinging to the eccentric notion that I should be able to travel without owning a car, I set off to see friends in Hertfordshire by privatised train.

The words of the Transport Secretary, promising "All the signs are that we are heading towards a new golden age for the railway", led me to expect a problem-free journey.

After a jolly evening I arrived at the station in good time for the last train to Lodon, confident that dismal experiences with British Rail - where the final departure gets cancelled, and it takes you hours to get home because BR has to organise taxis - would not be repeated.

Click. Small, tinny cough, then "Due to train failure, the 23.36 from Hertford North has been cancelled". Click.

West Anglia Great Northern, which runs (or fails to run) trains on the line, has solved the problem of passengers getting cross with station staff by removing the staff from stations. So a disembodied voice informs travellers that the last train has been cancelled.

By now it is midnight, and there has been no crackly public address suggestion about what arrangements are to be made for passengers with no way to get home.

Try this: you phone directory enquiries to find the number for the company's head office in Cambridge. There follows a disconcerting interlude where the operator asks: "Is that Cambridge in Cambridgeshire or Gloucestershire?" Having assured her it is the more celebrated of the two, you are told the number for National Rail Enquiries rather than anything for local calamities.

You ring constantly for 20 minutes, getting the engaged tone every time. Evidently the way that West Anglia Great Northern avoids that messy, expensive business of organising taxis is by making itself entirely uncontactable.

My friends were remarkably polite considering that I turned up on their doorstep again in the early hours of Sunday morning hoping for a place to sleep. And I finally arrived back at King's Cross just nine hours late. Is this a record for a 15-mile journey?

One of the better developments of British Rail shortly before it was dismembered was to introduce in-train magazines. But a line in the current edition of the bandy West Coast publication 20:20 unwittingly helps the image of the decline of the railways.

The subject of the article is Preston, one of Britain's great rail towns. But you would never guess so from the story, whose telling quite is: "At the moment Prestoo is a place you pass by on the main railway". Rail passengers thereby get the not-so-subliminal message that they really should be travelling by car. Maybe I should buy one after all.

Uncle Walt's lost ancestors

Jon Winter went in search of the noble Disneys of Lincolnshire



'Here lies Hautacia, daughter of William Disney, Lord of Norton' in the mortuary chapel of St Peter's Church in Norton Disney

PHOTOGRAPH: JON WINTER

We all know the stories; those adopted dogs in *101 Dalmatians*, the forsaken stepchild in *Snow White*, Dumbo the baby elephant who was separated from his mother; the list goes on. Not so well known is the tale of an American boy, Walter Disney, with no birth certificate. What birth record there was for a child of his name was dated 10 years before he could have been born. This nagging ambiguity about his origins and the possibility that he had been adopted were to trouble him throughout his adult life.

Yet, in the late Forties he arrived in Lincolnshire to find his purported Disney ancestors.

Today, those on the Disney trail in Lincolnshire should start in Lincoln itself. Few local guide books acknowledge that "the world's favourite uncle" has his roots in a Lincolnshire family, but you will find some interesting snippets in the city library. Among these is an early family tree spanning two centuries (plenty of Johns, Matthews, Williams and Henrys, although no Walters).

You'll soon discover that the Disney family was of Norman extraction, arriving as soldiers of fortune with William the Conqueror, and that Disney is an anglicisation of D'Isigny (Isigny being a small village near Bayeux in Normandy).

A sketchy history muddles their early years, but what is certain is that they became a family of some significance,

prospering as farmers and putting their name to a small village in the east of the county. And so things might have remained if their crusading tendencies hadn't led them astray as part of a failed rebellion against the King in the late 1600s. Forced out of England, they moved to Ireland for some years before

decamping again, some back to France, and others, including Walt's great-grandfather, to America.

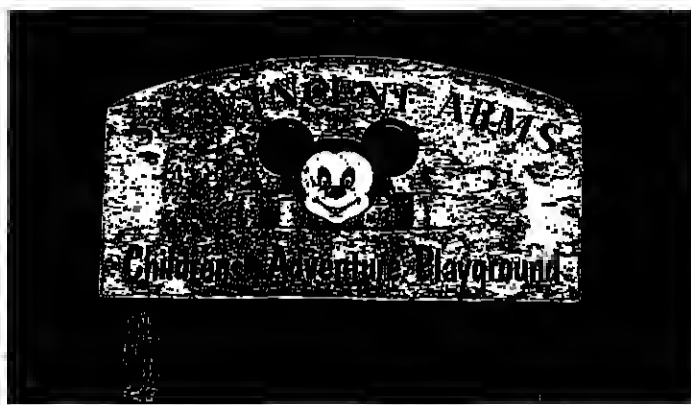
Little in the library mentions Walt's visit to Lincolnshire, except a back issue of a parish magazine.

"Walt Disney paid a visit, I believe to Norton Disney. What was not made clear at the time was that he was the adopted child of a Disney, and so had no blood relationship with the ancient family of Lincolnshire Disneys."

On the trail of Walt, you make for the village of Norton Disney, some 10 miles from Lincoln, with its "romantic, unsophisticated church lost in the willows of the river Witham, filled with ancient Disney monuments". It's a place you'd expect to have outgrown this rather quaint guidebook description, given there are at least three separate signs diverting traffic to the village off the A46; yet the place is indeed small, with

just a string of plain houses, a church and a pub.

In my view, the pub is always a good place to start, and although I was greeted in the St Vincent Arms with customary village suspicion, I found what I was looking for. Pinned above the fireplace were the cuttings I had failed to



locate in Lincoln Central Library. Dated 30 July 1949, they reported the events of Walt's brief visit.

"Private and personal Norton Disney, Lincolnshire, England. Arrived just after lunch." Walt had scratched in his diary before strolling off to point his cine-camera around the village. The fading photographs show Walt absorbed in the search for facts about his family name. He is pictured studying the tombs and gravestones and with the vicar,

leafing through reams of ancient church registers signed by past generations of Disneys. But he didn't stop for long. "Afraid I must pop off now - learnt that expression over here. You English are always popping places."

There's something furtive in pushing open the door to an ancient, dusty little church and finding yourself alone as it closes behind you. You feel compelled to look around quickly and leave as soon as possible. This feeling is prolonged at St Peter's church in Norton Disney, where there is plenty to delay the curious visitor. The task of investigation is, however, made easier by dropping a few coins into a box and taking the parish guide.

There are five Disney monuments in all, depicting two Williams, two Joans, a Richard and a Hautacia in various forms of suspended animation. Carved in stone and set in a low, arched recess is the effigy of Juan D'Isney, hands clasped to breast, dressed in a coif and wimple with hanging drapery to the feet - the costume dates her to the early 1300s. Also in stone are the second Joan and Sir William, son of the chapel's founder. He is kitted out as a knight in full armour.

Commanding the best position on the floor of the mortuary chapel is the effigy of a late-14th-century lady dressed in a long, close-fitting habit. She lies on a low plinth, hands clasped, with her head on two diagonally set cushions. An inscription on one side reads "Here lies Hautacia, daughter of William Disney, Lord of Norton".

The fifth monument is a framed brass plaque dating from some time in the 17th century, whose principal purpose was to commemorate two generations of Disneys. It is engraved with the Disney coat of arms, the crests of related families, and images of both a William and a Richard Disney with their wives and numerous children, each with their names engraved above them. At the bottom is a written tribute to the exemplary lives led by William and Richard, yet evidently not all of their offspring were to follow this example. There is a small, rectangular hole in the brass where the names of Richard's sons were cut out of the plaque in connection with a lawsuit concerning Richard's will.

On my way out I stopped to sign the visitors' book. Sadly, it wasn't old enough to reveal whether Walt had written anything about resolving that nagging doubt, but there among the light-hearted messages was an entry on 15 September 1996 - "Matthew Disney, Cambridge - direct descendant of William and Richard Disney". A real Disney, no less.

Taking the Mickey in Orlando

Emily Hatchwell sneaks a look at Disney's future themes

If you've been thumbing through your Walt Disney World brochures or watching that free Disney video advertised on TV, think twice before picking up the phone to make a booking. There are good reasons for putting off your trip to Orlando until 1998.

Disney's Animal Kingdom, due to open in May 1998, is Walt Disney World's first new theme park for nine years, complementing the Magic Kingdom, EPCOT and Disney-MGM Studios. It will feature Disney's usual winning combination of storytelling, magic and thrill rides, but, for the first time, living animals will also make an appearance. (You have to wonder how Disney, in its meticulously controlled fantasy world, will accommodate real animals whose behaviour cannot be programmed and which cannot learn a script.)

Described as "a new kind of live-action adventure park", this is no Windsor Safari Park. It sounds more like a cross between *Born Free* and *Jurassic Park*. Visitors will go on safari to Africa where they will experience, according to the publicity, "true-life

adventure stories of mystery, danger and humour" - though it's not explained what role the herds of giraffe, lions and other animals will play. Given Disney's obsession with safety, it's unlikely that you'll be chased across the savannah by a pack of salivating hyenas. The other two elements of the Animal Kingdom are more old-school Disney - where Audio-Animatronics technology brings to life a world of dragons and other fairytale creatures and then whisks you back 65 million years to a prehistoric land inhabited by dinosaurs.

For its competitors in the entertainment industry, watching the Disney Corporation at work must be both awe-inspiring and depressing. In its latest bid to outdo the rest, in 1998 Disney will launch two cruise ships from Fort Canaveral, a couple of hours' drive from Orlando. Cruise ships with knobs on, Disney's ocean liners will be 25 per cent bigger than average, with almost an entire deck dedicated to kids, plus special "adults-only" and family areas. (That the three- or four-night cruises will include a day on a private beach

in the Bahamas is almost by the by.) The maiden voyage of *Disney Magic*, the first ship to be launched, on 12 March 1998, is already fully booked, but there are plenty of vacancies for the subsequent twice-weekly sailings. Its sister ship, the *Disney Wonder*, is due to set sail in November 1998.

You can buy cruise-only packages, but the idea is that you buy a package combining a stint in Walt Disney World with a cruise. The cost for a family of four, in the cheapest category, will be around US\$3,575 (£2,234) for four nights in Walt Disney World and three nights at sea. Flights not included. A week in Walt Disney World alone costs around US\$1,770 (£1,106) - excluding flights - for a family of four.

Other new developments seem rather trivial by comparison. Pleasure Island, with its teen-oriented nightclubs, and the shops of Disney Village Marketplace, are being added to and

jazzed up to form a new entertainment zone called Downtown Disney. New shops, restaurants and clubs are opening here over the next year, but the largest-scale attraction won't be launched for another 18 months. This is Cirque du Soleil - the Canadian circus act that first hit the big time in the Eighties. Its eccentric blend of circus arts, street entertainment and music will be on permanent show at Walt Disney World from winter 1998.

Disney would hate you to look as far ahead as 1998. They want you next year but they want you this year too. If you aren't persuaded to resist the magic of Disney until 1998, book now: cheap and moderately priced rooms at Walt Disney World are already booked up far more than the summer.

For a free 30-minute video about Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida, dial 0990 000 000.

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something to declare

Bagain of the week

Accommodation within Britain for £2 per night is still possible, specifically at three camping barns in the West Pennines operated by Lancashire Countryside Service. The barns, at Rivington, Darwen and Entwistle Reservoir, have no heating or lighting. You must book in advance by writing to the Great House Barn

Information Centre, Rivington Lane, Horwich, Bolton BL6 7SB. Details of low-cost accommodation elsewhere in the British Isles is contained in the *Independent Hostel Guide 1997*, itself a bargain at £3.95. Order through the Backpackers' Press, 2 Rockview Cottages, Matlock Bath, Derbyshire DE4 3PG.

Trouble spots

Risks in the east of Europe, according to alerts issued this month by the Foreign Office

Belarus: Parts of Belarus were badly contaminated at the time of the Chernobyl nuclear accident. Care should be taken throughout the country to avoid certain foodstuffs (primarily dairy produce, mushrooms and forest fruits)

which can carry high levels of radiation. Greece (Corfu): Given the current unrest in Albania and the close proximity of Albania to Corfu, great care should be taken by yacht owners sailing in the Corfu Channel. Vessels should in particular keep well away from the Albanian coast and should stay overnight in harbours where boats can be guarded. Latvia: Travellers

should be alert to the possibility of mugging, theft and pickpocketing. Avoid unlit streets and parks at night. Car theft is rife. Where possible use guarded car parks, and keep valuables out of sight.

Travel Advice Unit (0171-238 4503 or 4504, or fax 0171-238 4545); on the Internet, at <http://www.fco.gov.uk/> or BBC2 Ceefax, page 470 onwards.

مكتبة من الأصول

Springtime in Big Thunder Mountain

John Watkins clocks a day in Disneyland Paris, which celebrates its 5th birthday today

John Watkins took the Eurostar to Marne la Vallée/Chessey, better known as Disneyland Paris, accompanied by his children Joe (12) and Sam (10). This is his minute-by-minute account of a day in the park

9.05am First disappointment. Big Thunder Mountain roller coaster closed. Worryingly, cast member cites "lack of traction". Told to come back in an hour.

9.20am Cross to Discoveryland. Second disappointment: Sam too small for Space Mountain – but lip quiver bravely quelled. Joe and I

undamped. Inside holding-area, glissime roller-coaster roaring through darkness. Joe thinks he's developed a serious heart condition. The crew's involuntary green as Columbus' ship enters the black tube into blackest. Car twists through asteroid belt, pauses before cheesy moon, then plunges to earth. 10am Nausea subsiding, prepare to board Star Tours' Ender Express. Novice pilot Rex takes wrong turn and crashes into workshop. Get trapped inside huge ice crystal. Then ray into combat zone and have to be rescued by the Blue. 11.50am Autopia. Forced to employ blocking tactics to prevent unruly French scouts muscling past us. Question: why are grown men with tattoos so keen to drive cars with lawn-mower engines?

11.45am: Hot dogs at Casey's Cor-

ner, Main Street, just in time for Toy Story Parade. Green plastic soldiers particularly impressive. See Mickey holding court at top of small flight of stairs.

12:37pm After painful and protracted deliberation, make our purchases at the Toy Store. Sorcerer's Apprentice Mickey for Sam; velvety-black panther Bagheera for Joe.

1pm Catch train to Frontierland. Fend off aggressive geese craving popcorn.

1.05pm Spot Pluto and Minnie outside Cowboy Cookout Barbecue. Minnie gives Sam autograph and kiss. Pluto more interested in young

French girls stroking his nose.
1.10pm Big Thunder Mountain how open. Shuffle past ancient belt-driven machines into old mine.
1.20pm Still shuffling. Sudden suspicion that some of these buckets and oil lamps may be real

1.30pm Can't work out queuing pattern. Didn't we pass that boiler a few moments ago?

1.44pm Board runaway train. Cast member Olive nonchalantly swings her six-shooter. Duck involuntarily as we career through low tunnel and just made a wreck of it.

just evade a rock fall.
2pm Target practice at Rustler Roundup Shootin' Gallery. Uncertain if it's our shots making rooster lay, coffins open, cans spin etc.

2.30pm Waft past phantom dancers and diners in the Haunted House. Emerge in Boot Hill graveyard.



'1.30pm: can't work out queuing system...

Miraculously, Sam has grown an inch and can ride on Indiana Jones and Temple of Doom. Joe decides to sit this one out. Queue in authentic bamboo grove before emerging at foot of ancient Mayan temple encircled by rickety-looking track. Cranked up and up, then sickening plunge into loop-the-loop.

3.20pm Regain composure in Swiss Family Robinson's Treehouse. Tree definitely not wooden and river smells of chlorine, but rooms evocatively detailed.

4pm Join Pirates of the Caribbean
and are pitched into fearsome piratical battle. Buildings flame. Cannonballs splash. Brigands roister.

4.50pm Inspired by the pirates, Joe and Sam stage their own fight. Both informed that next aggressive act will incur 20-franc fine.

5.10pm Enter Fantasyland and Alice's Curious Labyrinth. Surprisingly enjoyable, especially hookah-smoking caterpillar and ranting Queen of Hearts. From castle, we

Queen in Hearts. From castle, we view Fantasy skyline: crooked houses, minarets, pointed towers. 5.55pm All suffering from sore legs, feet etc. Premium oo relaxing rides. Canine through Stomach Land in

Cruise through Storybook Land in a pink boat. Joe hopes we don't see anyone we know.
6.15pm Revived by popcorn sugar-burst. Take a spin in Mad Hatter's

burst, take a spin in Mau Hatter's Tea Cups, then queue for Dumbo the Flying Elephant. Divert children with mathematical poser. If 16 elephants each carry two people, and

rides last nine-and-a-half minutes, how long do we have to wait if there are still 67 people in front of us?
6:30pm Sun disappears behind Toad
11-11

6.36pm Get to ride Flying Elephants. Agree it wasn't worth the wait.
7.20pm Pizza at Pizzeria Bella Notti.

Indiana Jones on Joe's mind: he wonders if you could vomit on your own head in the loop-the-loop. Vows to go on ride first thing tomorrow.

Trees twinkle. Floodlights illuminate spires of Sleeping Beauty's Castle. 8:45pm Catch train for Frontierland. Blue neon crackles on Space Mountain. Myriad white lights turn Hotel

9.10pm Return to Big Thunder Mountain. Train like cartoon sil-

Minuteman, then like cartoon silhouette. Exhilarated by rushing descent past luminous bays and red warning lights. Go round again. 10pm Back to Main Street for Electric Parade. Cinderella's carriage is

10.45pm Return to Santa Fe Hotel.
Notice volcano at bottom of road.

11pm Totally exhausted. Crash out in Mexican-style room with ceiling fan and 16-channel TV.

Numerous operators sell package

Numerous operators sell package holidays to Disneyland Paris; some companies also offer day-trips. Eurostar (0345 303030) runs direct trains from London Waterloo.

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On Thursday the National Trust banned deer hunting on its estates. Meanwhile, if Labour wins the election it has pledged to hold

Duff Hart-Davis presents a countryman's view

The other morning we found that one of our barren ewes had broken a leg, and there was nothing for it but to put her down. Using a .22 rifle as a humane killer, I dispatched the poor creature painlessly – but at 7.30am we were left with a 150lb body to dispose of.

Luckily there was somewhere I could take it: the Berkeley Hunt kennels, 20 minutes' drive away. The bounds are still fed on raw meat, and the kennel staff run a flesh-collection service, whereby they pick up dead animals from farms in the district, or take in carcasses that are delivered. Farmers who allow the hunt access to their land pay only a token charge.

Were it not for the hunt, I would have been faced with the considerable expense of taking our ewe to an incinerator. What if the casualty had been a cow or horse, weighing half a ton or more? I do not

have the equipment to lift and transport so heavy an object. The Berkeley hounds eat more than 2,000 animals a year. If hunting were banned, and the pack dispersed, farmers in the area would face a huge disposal problem: to avoid the costs of incineration, many would bury

fallen stock, either in the ground or in manure-heaps, and leave them to rot. Multiply the Berkeley's 2,000 by the number of hunts that still collect flesh – at least 100 – and it is clear that a ban would create serious pollution.

A more emotive, yet equally

practical matter is the fate of the hounds. Hunt kennels now house about 25,000 foxhounds, and a lesser number of beagles and harriers. What to do with them in the event of a ban? The simplistic answer is that they can all go drag-hunting instead – but

this is totally unrealistic. John Berkeley, president of the hunt and owner of the hounds, "would not be happy to see them go drag-hunting". There have been hounds at Berkeley Castle for 800 years, and to him, hunting hounds is an art far removed

from the straightforward, high-speed dash along an artificially-laid trail that drag-hunting involves. He believes that most of the farmers who now support hunting would not tolerate the drag, and points out that, in any case, it needs far fewer hounds: six or

seven couple form an adequate pack – less than a quarter of what major hunts use for live operations.

John Fretwell, master of the Stowe beagles, makes the point that hunting dogs are not domesticated, and could not be taken on as pets. "Nobody who lives in a house could give a working hound the exercise it needs," he says. "For six months a year our beagles hunt two days a week, and cover up to 40 miles a day," he says. "If they're not hunting, we walk them twice a day. People don't realise that for generations they've been bred to cover long distances, and if they don't get enough exercise, they become bored and destructive."

Thus many thousands of hounds would have to be put down. "Who is going to destroy 15,000 dogs?" asks Jonathan Inglesant, secretary of the Quorn for 18 years. "If somebody knocks down a single pet with their car, there's a riot. Imagine deliberately killing 15,000 hounds all at once: it's not on."

A ban would produce a similar glut of horses. About 60,000 horses and ponies are now used primarily for hunting, and a third of these would become superfluous. The price of a good hunter would fall from £8,000-£15,000 to about £1,000, and that of a moderate horse from £2,000 to meat price – £500. Perhaps 15,000 perfectly sound animals would go to the slaughterhouse, and severe repercussions would shake Ireland – a prime source of hunters. Also, at present, when showjumpers and steeplechasers come to the end of their competitive careers, many get another 10 years of enjoyable life in the hunting field. If hunting ended, nobody would want to keep them on.

As for the effect on foxes: the basis of the present system is that hunters take off the surplus population, culling old and diseased animals first, and disperse the rest, thus keeping farmers happy and preserving an ecological balance. Most people agree that a ban would be – paradoxically – disastrous for the quarry.

In the Lake District the Biencathra – John Peel's pack, no less – kills 100 foxes a year. But Barry Tidd, the present huntsman, reckons that if a ban came into force, "there'd be an absolute free-for-all. Every man jack who could carry a gun or set a snare would be out there, and the fox would be exterminated in short order. The natural harmony and balance of this part of the world would be overthrown." Other observers point out that in East Anglia, where there is relatively little hunting, and gamekeepers rule the roost, there are already far fewer foxes than in prime hunting areas.

The countryside itself would deteriorate. Nobody disputes the fact that hunting has done much to embellish the landscape: in the course of two centuries countless copses and small coverts have been planted, or retained, specifically to harbour foxes, with results pleasing to the human eye and beneficial to other forms of wildlife.

Few people realise how much out-of-season work hounds do to keep bridleways

and footpaths open. In Sussex, for instance, the Chiddingfold, Leconfield & Cowdray has renewed 260 field and hunting gates, as well as innumerable stiles, over the past five years, and reckons that the materials which it provides are alone worth more than £5,000 annually.

Most hunts own woods – the Quorn has 40. In the event of a ban presumably they would be sold; certainly they would be neglected and overgrown until new arrangements were sorted out.

In rural areas many jobs would disappear. After 26 years as a hunt servant, Barry Tidd-hunter would lose everything: "Number one, my job. Number two, my house. Number three, my vehicle." Hundreds would be similarly deprived: grooms, drivers, vets, farriers.

Yet the most far-reaching effect would be on social activity. Townspeople can scarcely imagine how the hunt and its doings permeate every level of rural life. At any given time, 80, and people are on every walk of life. Their aim is not to witness the death of a fox, but to ride in places to which they would otherwise have no access, to see the country and to gossip. The lure is the uncertainty about what may happen or where they may go. During the winter farmers talk constantly about where the hunt has been and where it is going next. The more remote the area, the greater the bond the hunt creates.

The Berkeley, which is typical, has a hunt supporters' club with 500 members, who may or may not belong to the hunt itself. The prime aim is to organise social functions and raise funds for charitable causes such as schools and playgroups. The club

holds fashion shows, discos, an annual hunter-trial for novices, and a four-mile fun-ride that attracts 150 riders.

There is an open day at the kennels, and a terrier show featuring races and a human tug-of-war across a river, so that the losers are bound to get a ducking. The hunt also fields cricket and skittle teams. On the agricultural side, it gives numerous cups for best crops, and exam for young farmers, and holds hedge-laying contests in order to perpetuate this age-old skill.

"Without all this," says Ted Waller, a Berkeley spokesman, "the country would be hollow. Life would go on, but it would be far more drab and soulless."

It is hardly surprising that, from elsewhere, one can hear mutters of rebellion. People are saying that, even if hunting is banned, they will carry on regardless; they will change the name of their pack from the Loamshire to the Loamshire Drag Hounds, and go through the motions of laying a trail. But if hounds happen to find a live fox, too bad – or, rather, great!

"After all," says one aficionado, "if the police can't be bothered to take action against half a dozen saboteurs acting illegally – as apparently they can't – how could they tackle 200 riders? And how could they prove that the hounds hadn't taken off on their own initiative?"

Is this just a killing field?



RIVER CAFE

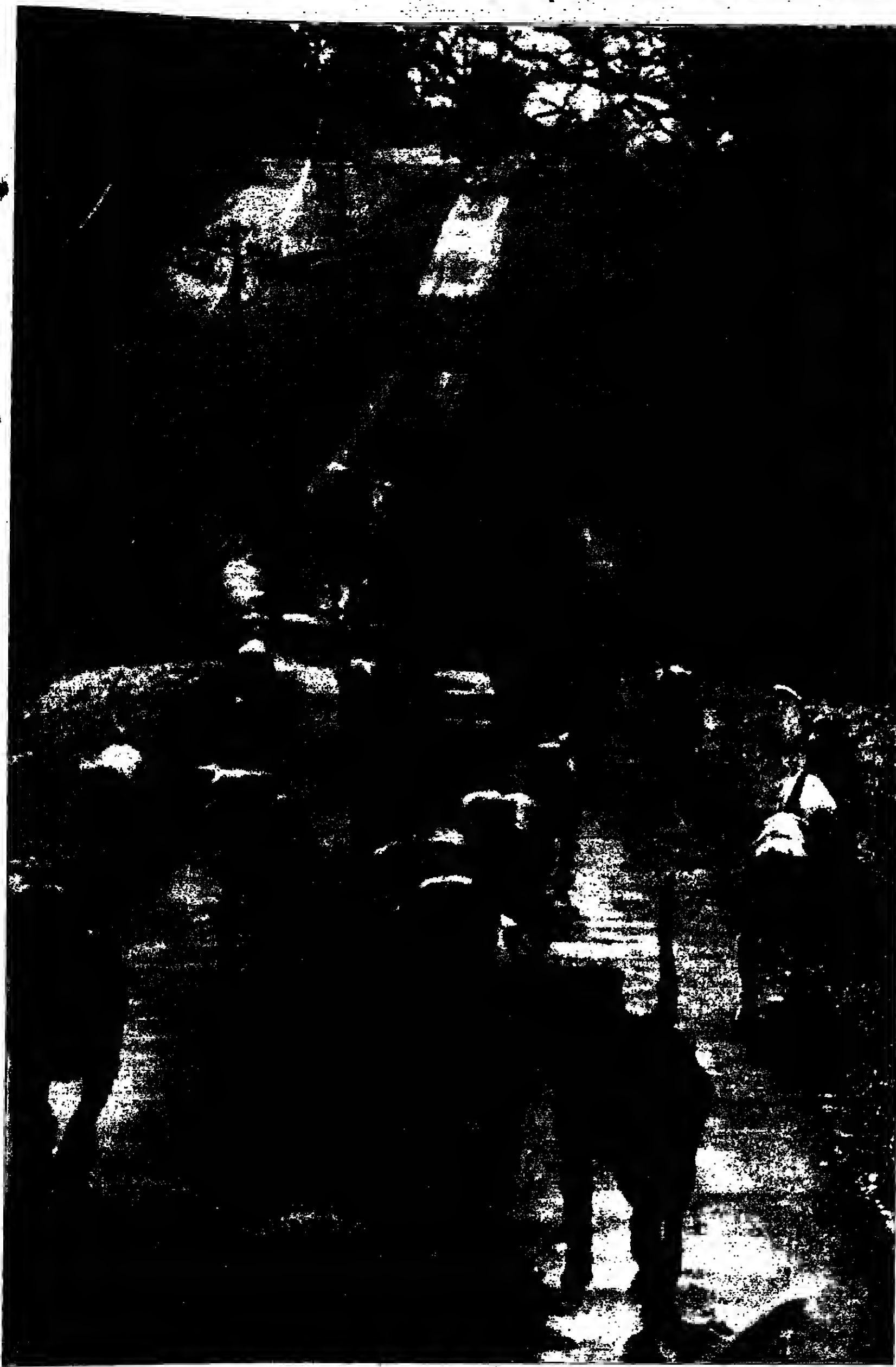
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Riding into

مكتبة من الأصول

a Commons vote that could outlaw all such blood sports. So what would be the realities of a total ban on hunting with hounds?



Hunting dogs are not domesticated, and could not be taken on as pets. Without enough exercise hounds become destructive PHOTOGRAPH: HAYDN JONES



The unacceptable face of culling: MAFF does not consider fox hunting to be a major factor in the control of the rural fox population PHOTOGRAPH: MAF

IN PURSUIT OF FACTS AND FIGURES

Since the first band of fledgling hunt saboteurs confronted a hunt, many battles have been fought among the hedgerows and fields of Britain. Some have been no more than maddening skirmishes between pros and antis; others have ended in violence, and at least one of them in death. It is without doubt one of the most emotive issues facing the countryside today. As the general election approaches, the main fight has shifted to the political arena, with economics playing a significant part. Labour, if it triumphs on 1 May, will hold a free vote in the Commons on hunting with hounds to decide the future for this ancient country pursuit. A new and timely report to be released in May from the Standing Conference on Countryside Sports, a "non-political body" which none the less admits that it formed to "present to Government and to the public a more effective case in defence of those countryside sports involving a live quarry", lays out possibly the most comprehensive survey to date of the economic significance of hunting.

Collectively, the annual expenditure on countryside sports - hunting, shooting and fishing - reaches £3.86bn, an early summary of the report says. The majority of that money is spent by British anglers but in 1996 the expenditure by the mounted and the foot-followers of hunting packs totalled £175m.

More than 215,000 people in Great Britain hunt or follow hounds.

Some 8,215 manufacturing, supply, trade and service organisations are in part dependent on hunting, the highest proportion of all country sports. However, the overall number of people employed by country sports and allied trades - the equivalent of 60,000 full-time jobs - is a good 5,000 lower than previous estimates.

The pro-hunt pack, led by the British Field Sports Society, tends to concur with the report's statistics but has also revealed its own, taking an unidentified "average" hunt "somewhere in Britain" which it calls simply the Blankshire. "It is not one of the big rich hunts nor one of the small farmer's packs," said the BFSS, but "hunts five days a fortnight".

The Blankshire spends a total of £16,295 a year, including everything down to the last horseshoe, paying for the services of huntsmen, vets, farriers and drivers.

The League Against Cruel Sports, a constant thorn in the huntsman's side, tells a different story. It says the numbers

of people employed by hunting are exaggerated to fuel the pro-hunt cause, estimating that it sustains less than 1,000 full-time jobs and raises far less cash for the UK economy. It claims up to 20,000 foxes are killed by hounds each year and is keen to highlight results from a Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food report in 1994 that showed less than 5 per cent of lamb deaths were down to predation and hence, while it accepted foxes can cause "serious local problems for individual farmers", it "does not consider foxes to be a significant factor in lamb mortality nationally". Neither did MAFF consider fox-hunting to be a major factor in the control of the fox population.

Country sports enthusiasts are clearly concerned about a Labour victory in May and a subsequent hunting vote. Last week they launched the Union of Country Sports Workers to protect their industry and called for direct talks with the main party leaders.

The BFSS's chief executive, Robin Haubury-Jenison, has been doing his own bit of soapboxing, taking a roadshow around the country to secure support. So far his Election Fighting Fund has raised more than £125,000. He is passionate about his cause.

"Country sports are the integral element in the British countryside which holds the rich tapestry of wildlife in Britain together," he said. "Any huntsman will tell you that with a properly conducted hunt, the fox feels only one quick snap to the back of the neck. Then, yes, it may get torn apart, but that's nature, red in tooth and claw."

The League's press officer, Kevin Saunders, blanches at such words. "We have done post mortems on some foxes which have shown that the fox doesn't get killed immediately; sometimes there's not a mark on the fox's neck whereas the animal might have been disembowelled or ripped apart," he said. "Hunts use high-stamina but slow-running hounds to prolong the chase - that's deliberate cruelty in our eyes."

So the battle rages on. And Wednesday's ground-breaking study on deer-hunting by the Cambridge University animal behaviour expert Professor Patrick Bateson, which found that an animal hunted by horse and hounds goes through a long and painful period of intense stress and exhaustion, has inflamed both sides and strained relations even further.

Matthew Brace

Riding into the fray

This week 'The Field' magazine charged into the political controversy. Jack O'Sullivan reports

You wouldn't automatically associate *The Field* with political controversy. The magazine, started in 1853 for the entertainment of country gentlemen, is normally unconcerned with the preoccupations of the chattering classes. The rules of lawn tennis and the design of the modern golf ball, both established in *The Field*, are more its life. Indeed, the last time the magazine led public debate was probably when it had its own correspondent reporting on the Crimean War and it published personal narratives from the Charge of the Light Brigade.

Its current edition is typical, with a piece on hunt pantomimes and helpful advertisements to meet every need of today's gentry - training for gun dogs, "a unique opportunity" for red deer stalking, safaris in southern Africa, mail-order sales for Barbour jackets and, of course, an entry giving details of how to hire "staff of distinction".

And for months, the chief talking point among the readership has not been politics but an extraordinarily useful revelation about how best to catch a salmon. Apparently, the angler's trick is to trim a little pubic hair from



the woman in his life and use it to make the fly - the female pheromones are said to send the cock salmon wild for the rod. The letters' column has been packed with readers offering confirmation that they, too, have been successful with these little tufts and suggesting new names for the experimental fly - pub grub, bush baby and frizzle lizzie are just some of the useful contributions to the debate.

In this light, the robust and angry nature of *The Field's* May edition is a bit of a departure. It defiantly offers a "hit list" of 72 MPs, all with majorities under 5,000, who have declared their opposition to hunting. *The Field's* initiative is a sign of just how concerned the hunting, shooting and fish-

ing brigade is about a pledge in Labour's manifesto to offer a free vote on whether hunting with hounds should be banned. The pledge, though weaker than the expected commitment that a Labour government would simply ban such sport, has aroused the ire of the publication's readers.

Jonathan Young, *The Field's* editor, hopes that discerning voters will blackball the hounders who wish to ban the bloody pleasures of rural folk. *The Field* may have only 31,000 subscribers and, thanks to the dentists' waiting rooms, 290,000 readers, but there are, he says, 4.5 million country sports supporters. Even the likes of Malcolm Wicks, Labour MP for suburban Croydon North East and on the list of 72 MPs who have voiced their desire for a hunting ban, is expected to quake at the risk of offending the blood sports lobby. He and other targeted MPs must realise, says the magazine, that "if it is their wish to destroy country people's lives it will cost them dear. We will not come quietly".

"We feel," says Young, "that there is little to choose between Labour and the Conservatives, so there will be many single-issue voters this time around. We think this will be the single issue."

It isn't difficult to see why Mr

Young is upset. If fox hunting were banned, the hounds, he says, would be saved until the law was eventually overturned. "But the equestrian industry would take the most tremendous blow. The price of horses would fall. Point-to-point meetings would disappear in the long run because they are organised by hunts. There wouldn't be the volunteers to keep them going. That would be a terrible shame - Lord Gyllene, this year's Grand National winner, came from a point-to-point stable."

Young believes that the whole hunting issue has become no more than an icon for class prejudice. "That is so outdated and outmoded," he says, arguing that hunting draws in country people from all walks of life.

He takes comfort in his belief that his Labour opponents are, in fact, in pursuit of the unattainable - that it will prove impossible to frame a law that bans hunting while continuing to permit hounds to be used to drive foxes in front of a line of guns. But Mr Young is also worried by fears that Labour will introduce controls on the access of the under-18s to guns.

"All of us were trained to use guns as young people," says Young. "So if you stop the under-18s owning them or having access to them, you will then lose the recruitment into the sport."

All in all, it looks like an unusually tough few months of campaigning ahead for *The Field*. Establishing a final name for that new salmon fly might have to wait a while.

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Green thoughts in a green shade

Foliage is the architecture of a garden. From giant fennel to parsley fronds, Anna Pavord suggests some striking leaf combinations

All the gardeners I know (including me) are wandering round with soppy smiles on their faces. So far, it has been a fantastic spring. Soon the doom and gloom merchants will be reminding us of April's treachery and counting up the number of times snow has fallen this month to smother the pear blossom at birth.

But I'm on a roll. Already, I've weeded and waited one large area of the bank. Waiting is the children's term for the fiddling sorts of jobs that you do to round off a session of heavier, more demanding tasks. It includes snipping dead bits from the leaves of irises, taking off a few dead twigs from the roses, nipping dead heads off the daffodils, training tendrils of clematis in different directions. Individually, none of the jobs amounts to much, but taken together, the effect is noticeable.

When the paths have been raked with fresh gravel or crushed bark, bits of the garden will be looking almost kempt. That is unusual so early in the year. Having heavy clay, I am not used to being able to garden all through the winter, as we have this season. Last spring was so slow, so cold. This year, since the snowdrops, there has been a tumult of flowers: primroses of all kinds, scillas, narcissus, pulmonarias, grape hyacinths, blue and white striped "Columbine" violas, spurge. The big spurge such as *Euphorbia wulfenii* are spangled with ladybirds.

But paradoxically, although it is the flowers we talk about, it is the

great swelling mounds of foliage in the garden that make the whole place look rich and furnished again. Particularly vivid and brilliant is the fountain of growth from the giant fennel, *Ferula communis*, a different family of plants from the fennel that you eat, but with the same fine, thread-like foliage.

In good soil, this plant will make a fabulous mound of lacy green three or four feet across, and perhaps two feet high. Then when it feels it has built up enough of a foundation, it sends up a huge flowering stem, topped by flat heads of yellow flowers. But the leaves are its chief glory, though leaf sounds too meaty, too bulky a term for this filigree spun wirework. Next to it are the spear leaves of a tall white-flowered iris, *Iris orientalis* and a mound of brunnera, covered now with forget-me-not flowers.

Its leaves, that is the tall spear-like kind that go with beardless irises such as *I. orientalis*, *I. sibirica* and *I. monspeliensis* are very useful at this time of the year, acting like exclamation marks among low mounds of geranium leaves or thalictrums just beeping themselves up into action. You couldn't use bearded iris like this. They would resent having their rhizomes covered or shaded by vigorous neighbours. But *I. orientalis* seems to grow anywhere in sun or shade, the leaves eventually reaching three feet in height.

There is a new giant cow parsley (*Selinum tenuifolium*) on the bank, too, not such a hypnotically vivid green as the giant fennel, nor as finely cut in its foliage. But one of

my heroes, the Edwardian gardener E A Bowles called it "the queen of the umbellifers". So I had to have it. Planted out as a baby, it seems improbable that it will eventually top five feet. Height is a difficult thing to bear in mind when you are placing plants. I find it easier to feel their width, to be aware of sideways growth.

The selinum flowers with typical flat umbellifer heads, white, rather than yellow, but, as with the giant fennel, it is planted for its leaves rather than its flowers. They help to disguise the bottom of the multi-stemmed Judas tree. That is about to erupt in its abrupt way into purple flower. They burst, stemless, straight out of the trunk and branches. It is a weird trick. You can imagine the flower inside, head hutting the imprisoning bark and - although you would not have put any money on it - winning.

Bowles, who as a writer never wants to leave you in any doubt as to his opinions, also called *Selinum tenuifolium* "the most beautiful of fern-leaved plants". Not at the moment, it's not. The laurels go to sweet cicely, *Myrrhis odorata*. That is because it is one of the few of the fern-leaved umbellifer tribe to get its act together this early in the year. The foliage is a wonderfully fresh green, and it is already in full flower, heads of greenish, greyish white, oot bowy, but quite sweet-smelling. Does the plant get its "odorata" tag from the flowers? Or from the leaves, which smell of aniseed?

It grows in deep shade in our garden, partnered by the hefty spotted



Giant fennel: the heads of yellow flowers may be impressive, but the leaves are its chief glory

PHOTOGRAPH: GARDEN PICTURE LIBRARY

leaves of pulmonaria and the shiny strap foliage of hart's tongue ferns. Gerard, one of the early herbalists, said that to eat it was "exceeding good, wholesome and pleasant among other sallade berbes", but perhaps they were keener then on the taste of aniseed than we are now. In the oorth country, the plant was once used as a polish, rubbed into oak panelling and buffed up to a shine when the juice had dried off.

Sweet cicely is a compact plant, no more than two feet high and wide. You wouldn't want it in a starring role, but it is usefully early and unfussy about shade. It makes a good backdrop for low mats of

Primula vulgaris sibirica which are flowering now, short-stemmed mauve flowers, each with a yellow eye. It doesn't seed around like the common primrose, but the clumps are easy to split up, once flowering is over.

Variety in form is perhaps the first thing you notice in 'contrasts' of foliage plants: upright iris sword leaves against chunky brunnera leaves, lacy sweet cicely against the stout, spotty foliage of pulmonaria, but there are other contrasts to bear in mind too, contrasts of texture, of colour, of variegation, of habit.

The drooping quality of the alliums' leaves, growing first up, then

turning over on themselves so that their tips touch the ground, is a distinct landmark among the determinedly upright spears of peony foliage, pushing through the ground now with knobby flower buds firmly and bossily in place on top. And the peonies' leaves themselves, with their strange bronzed finish, make a good foil for the tulips.

Although you do not think of either alliums or peonies as being primarily foliage plants, they are both positive assets at the moment. Their real moment of glory will come later when they flower. But how many plants is the garden carrying that contribute very little out-

side their flowering period? I have already started sniffing around nurseries for new plants to fill in some holes. Each time I look at a possible candidate I ask it "So what do you look like when you are not at your best?" How fortunate I don't have to answer the same question.

Giant fennel and the giant cow parsley, *Selinum tenuifolium*, can be got from Tim Ingram, Copton Ash, 105 Ashford Rd, Faversham, Kent ME13 8XW (01795 535919). The nursery is open Tues-Thurs and Sat-Sun (2-6pm). Plants can be sent by mail order. Send four first class stamps for a catalogue.

gardening

Are you growing bananas?

Anna McKane offers some friendly advice

Your small crop is not likely to damage the Windward Islands' economy in the near future, but one's own hunch of bananas is the latest trend among conservatory owners as growers search for ever-more exotic plants to grow.

I have just been given a banana plant, an offer from a parent plant which produced a cluster of bananas last summer in a small suburban conservatory. My plant, which is about 18 inches high, is *Musa acuminata* 'Dwarf Cavendish', a smaller relative of the banana grown commercially in the West Indies.

It is the most common variety for those who are hoping for edible fruit, although it is grown first and foremost for its leaves. They are huge, more than two feet long and a foot wide when the plant is established. Each leaf appears tightly rolled at the growing point, and then opens and flops outwards, so as the plant gets bigger it has a very jungle look. This is added to by the offsets which will appear around the main stem if the plant is happy. The leaves are very striking but not very tough - if brushed against they may tear or

become damaged. They may also become scruffy if the plant suffers in any other way, either through cold or through inadequate watering. But with plenty of food and light, the leaves grow so fast and so big that they have a very dramatic effect in summer.

'Dwarf Cavendish' will need to be six or seven feet high before it will fruit. Bananas grow very quickly so I may get fruit this year, but next year is probably more realistic. It needs a minimum temperature of 10C (50F) in the winter to be happy, although it may survive a slightly colder snap. It will need much more heat, and some - but not full - sunshine in the summer if it is to fruit.

Richard Beattie, nursery manager of Scarlett's Quality Plants near Colchester, which specialises in conservatory plants, said bananas should be grown in a peat- or coir-based compost, as loam would be too heavy. He recommends very generous feeding to get the dramatic, large leaves. The plants should be potted up with a slow-release fertiliser, but then fed regularly with a weak low-nitrogen fertiliser. Another grower even suggested feeding every other day dur-

ing the summer when the plant is growing fast.

Scarlett's new mail-order business, Conservatory PlantLine, offers *Musa basjoo*, also known as the Japanese banana, which is even harder than 'Dwarf Cavendish'. In mild districts it will survive outside if wrapped during the coldest weather in sacking or some other protective material. But there seems to be a rather bigger question mark over *M. basjoo*'s ability to produce fruit.

Having acquired my banana plant I am wondering now about a tropical fruit salad. Grapes, of course, can be grown in this country. And so can oranges and tangerines. But if you want to eat them, take care to avoid the conservatory citrus called "calamondin". If I get any bananas I might make a West Indian hot fruit salad: bananas, white peaches, dark sticky Barbados sugar and rum put in a hot oven for 20 minutes to give a tropical flavour to fruit which will have seen only the northern sun.

Scarlett's Quality Plants 01206 240466. Conservatory PlantLine 01206 242533

Sarah Raven, author of *The Cutting Garden* (Frances Lincoln, £25) is holding a series of courses this spring and summer at her home in East Sussex, where she has made two cutting gardens, packed with flowers for picking. For those with no gardening experience, there is a two-day course (21-22 April) on making a cutting garden, which covers all aspects of the subject: design, structure, plant selection, maintenance and harvesting. Another two-day course for beginners is planned for 12-13 May. The subject is "Do your own party or wedding" with the emphasis on fast-growing flowers, that will be ready to pick within three months of



CUTTINGS

sowing or planting. Call 01424 838181 for more information on the courses, held at The Oast, Perch Hill Farm, Brightling, Robertsbridge, E Sussex TN32 5H.

The Seventh International Heritage Rose Conference will be held at Cambridge this summer from 29 June to 4 July. The conference is aimed at those who love old

roses and enthusiasts from all over the world will speak. David Ruston from Australia will talk about roses in 17th- and 18th-century flower paintings. William Grant from the US is lecturing on species roses as garden plants. Included in the conference are a series of tours: the grower Peter Beales's display gardens in Norfolk, David Austin's English roses in Wolverhampton and the collection of old roses at Childerley Hall near Cambridge are all on the itinerary. Contact Peter Beales, London Rd, Attleborough, Norfolk NR17 1AY (01953 454707).

The National Trust plans a massive series of spring

plant fairs at various NT properties on Sunday 18 May. About 50 are planned that day across England and Wales. Wallington in Northumberland is taking part. So is Canons Ashby in Northamptonshire and Peirce in Sussex. The trust is appealing for plants to sell at the fairs so if you have spares, bear them in mind. The trust hopes to raise £100,000 from its fair day to spend on urgent garden conservation work. Get a Spring Plant Fair Day information pack by phoning 0181-315 1111 or writing (with a stamped, addressed envelope) to The National Trust Spring Plant Fair Day, PO Box 39, Bromley, Kent BR1 3XL.

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A buyers' guide to running away

Today, 27,000, of the 70,000 runners who applied to run tomorrow's London Marathon are in the final throes of preparation. They will not be out buying a last-minute pair of running shoes, or purchasing T-shirts and shorts. New clothes are a big no-no when running 26 miles and 385 yards is on the agenda. Far more likely are checks on their supply of Vaseline (all runners grease up before a big run) and ensuring a plaster or two is available to prevent the dreaded joggers' nipple.

Bill Adcocks, a former Olympic marathon runner, now works at the British Athletic Federation dispensing advice. He says: "Never, ever, wear new kit on the marathon. On the day, the clothes you wear are as important as the level of fitness achieved." Key advice from the Federation is to expose as much skin as possible when running so that sweat can evaporate easily. For men that means mesh vests and loose shorts, and for women little supportive crop-tops and gym-knicker style shorts. Wearing cotton sportswear is not advised: the fibres become weighed down with sweat and hinder the runner. Nylon, polyester or the specially patented CoolMax by DuPont and Dri-Fit by Nike are recommended instead. One can only pity the hundreds of participants swathed in pink elephant, clown or chicken outfits (not to mention their wife's cami-knickers and suspenders) running back-wards while juggling six balls and breathing fire.

Vaseline petroleum jelly, £1.19, by Boots, branches nationwide. "You wouldn't think of starting a car without oil, so no marathon runner should start up without grease," says Adcocks.

Blister protection kit, £3.19, by Boots. Can be applied before a big run to prevent blisters developing, or to cure them when they do. Available from Boots stores nationwide.

Blue and orange ladies 'Salvation' running shoes or 'Feet You Wear', £89.99, by Adidas, available from Cobra Sports, JD Sports, Sports Division and specialist retailers nationwide. The shoe is designed to emulate the way the foot works. There is traction and cushioning on the shoe in the same places as the foot, and rounded edges, instead of square ones - this is a high performance shoe for athletes.

Ladies red running top with built-in sports bra, £19.99, by Saucony (the American Indian word for running), and ladies blue running shorts, £19.99, by Saucony. Both items are made from breathable fabrics and are designed for maximum support and ease of movement; from Runners Need, as before.

Silver foil emergency heat blanket, £5.50, from Millers-stores nationwide.

High energy sports bars, from £1, from Runners Need (see below).

Polar heart rate monitor, £99.99, from Runners Need, 34 Parkway, London NW1, 0171-267 7525. The shop has everything from high energy drinks to a service that analyses the wear patterns of your sports shoes. This watch monitors your heart-rate, has a stop-watch and also lets you know when you should pace yourself - particularly useful for marathon running.

Contoured shock absorbing insoles, £13.99, by Solorthane. These insoles are recommended by physiotherapists, and are excellent for taking the strain of the run. Available from Runners Need (see above).

Red cotton vest, £15.99; navy cotton shorts, £22.99 - both by Russell Athletic. From Lillywhites branches nationwide (01506 439431). Cotton is good and comfortable for short runs. It soaks up moisture but doesn't disperse it, so the fabric begins to chafe and rub on an extended run.

Bottle green mens' running trainers DMX 2000, £110, by Reebok. This shoe has a dual element airflow system, and 'sensational' cushioning according to the blurb, which basically means the runner experiences none of the typical jarring impact associated with running. From JD Sports, Sports Division, Cobra Sports and specialist retailers nationwide. Inquiries 01524 580100.

Melanie Rickey

PHOTOGRAPHER: TONY BUCKINGHAM; STYLIST: HOLLY DAVIES

Hearts on sleeves to save the world

Lauren Shanley's exquisite, increasingly sought-after garments are made from recycled fabrics and other bits of jumble. Shan Senofield reports



Lauren Shanley: 'I found a huge bag of linen and lace handkerchiefs at a jumble sale and made someone's wedding dress'

"Whatever you do, don't describe my designs as patchwork," says Lauren Shanley, in her shop at Gabriel's Wharf, amidst the most extravagant fabrics seen this side of Jaipur. "Patchwork" is not a word that you would associate with these fluent, luminous outfits, which swathe a growing number of Londoners. As well as clothes, the shop is crammed with bags, jewellery, mirrors and hats made from scraps of recycled materials and Quality Street wrappers. The unmistakable feel of the subcontinent comes from her many trips to south-east Asia and India.

Between towering piles of fabric, Lauren sits at her sewing machine resplendent in a jacket she has created from tangerine curtain material. Behind her hangs a collaged and appliquéd miracle, tiny angel faces peeking from behind silver embroidery. It is a coat. These brilliant three-dimensional works of art are cooed from bags of jumble and scraps of ancient fabric.

"I once found a huge bag of linen and lace handkerchiefs at a jumble sale and made someone's wedding dress from them. It was probably an old lady's lifetime collection," she says. "The dress was very full and layered, and I embroidered it with silver thread."

She recently made a dress with a purple and green cape for a society wedding at the Dorchester. "I sometimes make the groom's clothes, too," she says, nodding towards a glorious waistcoat with a collage guitar surreptitiously sliding over the shoulder.

As the sign on the shop window says, Lauren is "committed to recycling". She creates most of her fabrics by transforming donated velvets, chiffons and Fifties curtains in the four steps to uniqueness. She starts with rectangular panels of materials which she collages, embroiders and appliques, finishing the elaborate process with gold or silver threads. Most of her

commissioned work is made from these recycled materials. Customers, or "well-wishers", donate their satin and brocade curtains or bags of jumble. An Irish lady once sent a packet of original multi-coloured Twenties chiffon scarves.

The friendly atmosphere of the shop and its Aladdin-ish feel encourage people to stay and chat - often for hours. Lauren has discovered that many of her customers buy her clothes when they want to change their lives. "Colour is energy," she explains, "and it's so grey out there."

She waves towards the filthy Thames. "Colour allows us to make a strong statement about ourselves and fight against a society that tries to push us into all being the same. There is a definite body politic in my work. I'm into things being comfortable, so they're often soft and drapy. I'm often asked to make things for people who have difficulty getting what they want in standard shops."

Her customers range from teenagers to much older women, from students to lecturers, from pregnant brides to radical feminists. They are all people who want styles that can't be dated, and look better with age. "The clothes look better after people have sweated in them and made them lumpy. They become bedrooms."

As an artist in her native New Zealand, Lauren was always environmentally aware, and particularly interested in recycling. She collected and dyed rope and other organic rubbish from the beach, and later made wall hangings and soft sculptures which gradually evolved into clothes. She passes on her recycling philosophy by giving lectures and exhibitions, and doing workshops with school children.

Lauren's belief in the importance of recycling is part of a growing awareness about our responsibility to the environment. Rob Harrison, for one, is pleased to see

designers such as Lauren Shanley reusing fabrics. As a spokesperson for *The Ethical Consumer*, a Manchester based magazine, Rob shares Lauren's concern about the effects that clothes production have on the earth.

"It is a world-wide problem, having a massive impact on such things as water pollution from the bleaching and dyeing, land use for cotton instead of food crops, and pesticide poisoning."

He produces a litany of ecological evils. Cotton plants alone, for example, use up 25 per cent of world sales of pesticides; nylon production may account for half the emission of the greenhouse gas nitrous oxide in the UK. Heavy metals such as lead and titanium, used to fix colours, are toxic; some dyes are thought to be carcinogenic; and sheep-dips for wool may be poisoning our farmers.

Those of us who are not thrilled at the thought of cobble oodity, however, may rest in the con-

science-freeing notion of recycled clothing. "Globally," points out Rob Harrison, "recycling fabrics would cut these damaging effects on the environment by half."

Most of Lauren's work is now commissioned, but she also has ready-made garments hanging in the shop. Usually made from one piece of material with some stitching and embroidery, these waistcoats, trousers and jackets are one the less shimmering and incandescent. The jackets start off at around £50, increasing in price according to how much work is put into them. The commissioned clothes are more expensive, starting at about £200 per garment.

Price is based on labour alone, as Lauren does not charge for recycled material. Her most expensive coat, a radiant, iconic, embroidered vision, took about 100 hours to make and cost £1,500. Her cushions and bags are around £30, and she also sells work by other jew-

ellery makers and artists, including some particularly disturbing but enchanting brooches in the shape of cartoon girls.

Always an artist, Lauren doesn't like the idea of anyone else creating her fabrics or clothes. Each garment has her individuality and philosophy sewn into it. To relinquish this sense of ownership would endanger the idea of what a Lauren Shanley piece is. Because of this, there is a waiting-list for commissioned clothes, which can take anything from a couple of weeks to several months to make.

Lauren Shanley can be contacted Tuesday to Saturday, 11am to 6pm (0171-928 5782). An exhibition of her work will be held on 28 April. It is called 'Doris Day goes to India' and will be held at The Inner Space, Whitechapel Pottery, London E1, from 7pm. Tickets £10, (includes food and drink) can be ordered in advance.

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Adwatch by Meg Carter

Wranglin' for a share of the market

At last, official proof that broken bones have sex appeal. Anytime still unconvinced by David Cronenberg's *Crash* take note: the latest marketing campaign for Wrangler jeans employs real-life rodeo stars risking life and limb – a theme continued across all marketing activities down to the X-rays of broken limbs now dominating shop windows and jeans displays.

Professional rodeo star Jason, 22, appears in one ad boasting of his 59 injuries (including 27 broken ribs) sustained in just three years in the ring. Bodacious, the meanest and smartest bull on the circuit, features in another: "Worn by 99 out of 100 rodeo riders" is the unifying theme. Each commercial has been shot in rough 'o' ready home video style to reinforce Wrangler's brand-new marketing theme: real-life heroes of the American West.

The idea is an aggressive attempt to take on the world's leading jeans brand – Levi's. Wrangler Europe's marketing director, David Smith, explains: "We believe we've reached the point where we now have a real opportunity to break out

of the pack and truly challenge the leader." Forget high-gloss, slick production values – the time has come to get real. It's a familiar refrain last heard from the lips of Dennis Leary, brand spokesman for Holsten Pils. But it is one especially apt for the jeans market, which is heavily cluttered with competing brand names.

In the UK, Levi's enjoys a 23 per cent market share compared with Wrangler's current 8 per cent, as well as a cooler image, thanks to almost two decades of high-profile, high-gloss European advertising devised by the London agency Bartle Bogle Hegarty. It's a similar story in other European markets, where rival brands have long struggled to compete. That is, until Wrangler and its advertising agency, AMV BBDO, agreed the time had come to get aggressive.

"Rather than following established rules we believe we have rewritten them," Smith declares. The new ads – part of a £15m campaign – avoid duplicating clichéd jeans imagery featuring beautiful people, an eclectic mix of settings and scenarios and the next top 10 hit. Wrangler's positioning remains the same

as it always has been: the authentic Western jeans. At first glance, rival US brands Levi's and Lee may seem to have a similar tale – Levi's roots lie in the California gold rush, Lee's in the building of the railroads. "But that's history," he insists. "Rodeo is now."

And he's not joking. In case you didn't know, Wrangler is the official competition apparel of the Professional Rodeo Competition Association. The company even has research to prove its "99 out of 100 rodeo riders" claim. So the association with rodeo is legitimate. But is it really relevant in Europe? Absolutely, Smith retorts without hesitation. "Rodeo is the only real 'extreme sport'."

Image is key – one reason for the enduring success of Levi's. But there's a fine line to tread. With the highly discerning, advertising-literate 16-24-year-old audience predominantly targeted by each brand, it's easy to get it wrong. Witness the mixed reaction which greeted the latest Levi's ad, featuring a drowning man caressed beneath the waves by nude mermaids. Or Lee's Levi's pastiche involving a jeans-clad,



No bull: real-life rodeo stars risk life and limb for Wrangler's marketing men

weightless couple cavorting in space.

"Real values relevant to the brand's heritage" is Wrangler's claimed response. It's all about improving perceptions of the brand. People just won't buy them if

they don't think they're cool. And amongst Wrangler's core target audience – young men – something's already stirring. "A breath of fresh air," is how one twentysomething responds: "It

certainly makes them seem cooler than they did before."

That, at least, should get him as far as the changing room. As for the fit – well, Mr Smith and his team await his verdict.

For the past five hours, I have been carrying a sweaty hot cross bun, filled with salmon, in my handbag. I have also washed up after a dinner party, put eardrops in my cat's ear, swum forty lengths and been on live television. Now that's what I call an over-achieving kind of morning. Had I heeded at work, I would still have been on my second Styrofoam cup of coffee and stuck on an *Antiques Trade Gazette* crossword clue like "protrusions on a wine glass stem," five letters.

Who I say "oo" live television, I didn't exactly star, but was part of the studio audience, and they zoomed in on me – a lot – according to my mother, who added that my hair looked nice. The difference between me, a mere "clap now!" stooge, and the surprise guest, was that I had spent half-an-hour clambering around in the rubble, with my feticid Tupperware box, trying to find the studios, whereas Spring-fresh Twiggy

was limoed right over for lunch.

This was *Light Lunch*, "the flagship of Channel 4's oew-look daytime schedule," hosted by Mel Giedroyc and Sue Perkins, where they take one celeb chef, a few celestish celebs and mix with their own banter for a very long time. This "caring, sharing duo" were billed as the oew French and Saunders, so when two invitations arrived a couple of days ago, I wondered which of my ladies-who-can-lunch friends to make my lucky guest. My doctor friend was oo call, my temping friend was temping and my wealthy friend was at her pile in the country. I grew suspicious, so tuned in. *Light Lunch* was serving up heavy ham, in the form of Mel and Sue. After ten

Still no such thing as a free lunch

Under the counter: 'I have washed up after a dinner party, put eardrops in my cat's ear, swum 40 lengths and been on live television. Now that's what I call an over-achieving kind of morning'

minutes of cringing – before the guests had even arrived – I had to switch off. And so I went – alone. The rest of the audience in the queue looked like the same bus load of toothless pensioners that I encountered in Norfolk a couple of weeks ago, but the clement weather had brought about an

added bonus of hairy veined legs and corn revealing sandals. Just the ticket for a "cootemporary, upbeat" show, eh Mel and Sue? Once our "lunch money" had been distributed (£3) to reimburse us for the packed lunch we were invited to bring (this particularly pleased the bus party, who obviously made a

whopping profit) we were told to wait. Suddenly, a crew member, dressed in citro-trend and looking rather concerned, sidled up to me and the four other young women in the queue and ushered us away to the front of the building. She gave an explanation for this singling out, but I guess a front row of crimped-clad blue rinses sucking their meat paste sandwiches would not have been the right image to project to the "available 6.5 million afternoon viewers". So two 17-year-olds from Middlesex, two lassies from Scotland, and I – the golden youth – were given the front two rows and the wrinkles were berded to the back.

As for the show, I found it so dull that every time there was a close-up of

me my husband mistook me for one of the Glums. Squakky star Fran Drescher was the main guest. She took a couple of mouthfuls of the nosh cooked by the guest chef and complained about the gaseous nature of the cauliflower. I agree – as if the show needed more hot air.

A quote from this newspaper in the *Light Lunch* press release reads: "There's no doubt which way Mel and Sue are going to go, and it's out down," I can only think the critic was going to add "It's up. Up the Swanee."

So, "there-you-go" girls. And no, I'm not going to eat my horrid hot cross bun.

No such thing as a free lunch. They pay you £3 to bring a packed lunch. The catch? You have to watch the show.

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Lindsay Calder

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Gavin Green

The Escort darted off the line like Linford leaving the blocks, but about 100 times faster

Tony Bennett may have left his heart in San Francisco. I ended up leaving my stomach, and the rest of my innards, at the start-line of the Goodwood Park hill-climb course. The epic race was performed by one Ford Escort world championship rally car, which bears about as much relation to the Escorts you park next to at Sainsbury's as Nick Faldo does to the blokes you see wielding golf clubs at the local 18-hole. That trick Escort was ably abetted by a Welshman called Gwynndaf Evans, the reigning British rally champion.

The scene was glorious Goodwood. But if you think the horse-racing track is special, you should visit Goodwood House, where his Lordship the Earl of March and Kimara (Charles March to his mates) lives. Even better, visit Goodwood House in mid-June, and you'll see a peculiarly British event: the Festival of Speed.

Last year almost 100,000 people turned up for the fun. It is the Royal Ascot of motoring, a magical mix of lovely cars and picnics in one of England's most beautiful corners. This year it'll be better than ever and, as if to prove it, the organisers put on a press day recently and invited various backs and top racers along for some fun. The racers asked the backs to sit shotgun as they stormed up the hill-climb course, as used in the festival.

That's how I came to be sitting next to Gwynndaf in the cramped, hot, spartan cabin of an Escort rally car, just returned from the East African Safari, welded inside the bucket-shaped passenger seat by a seat-belt that could hold down King Kong. It straps around your chest, your waist and your groin.

Once buckled in, you're stuck. Gwynndaf told me how he crashed in his last rally, the Welsh, before powering on to second place. He's a little, balding bloke, quietly spoken and unassuming. He was wearing his Nomex space suit. I was wearing a pair of chinos and a thick jacket that was all crunched up in the bucket seat, making me even more uncomfortable. Gwynndaf said this Escort has a turbo-charged 300bhp engine (not bad from two litres), seven speeds in its gearbox and four-wheel drive.

Ex-F1 driver Derek Bell had just stormed up the hill in an old Ferrari sports racing car, and some other guy, who was clearly nothing like as good as Bell or Gwynndaf, had just spun his old Lotus 72 Formula One car on the first corner. It was our turn, and I was thinking what a beautifully peaceful and tranquil place Goodwood is, just as it was time to go.

I have been driven in racing cars and rally cars before; I have driven racing cars myself, and I have even been up in a Red Arrows Hawk. But my ageing body has never, ever been abused and shocked so thoroughly as it was on that start.

The Escort just darted off the line like Linford leaving the blocks, but about 100 times faster. No dipping rear end, spinning the tyres or wagging the tail, as you normally experience from fast cars accelerating off the line. This car just went. Just like that. In an instant. Goodbye.

My body was there with Gwynndaf, my eyes were there in the Escort, but the rest of me was back there with the starter. Gwynndaf changed gears with little wrist flicks, and I reckon we were already in about sixth, and probably doing well over 120mph, when it was time to negotiate the first corner. Gwynndaf braked hard – hard and long enough for my viscera to catch up. And after that I was fine. He drove fast up the rest of the circuit, all right. We screamed past the stately portico of Goodwood House, and then left the open, elegant grounds and sped through a forest, familiar Gwynndaf territory, and through various fast and slow bends. But Gwynndaf so obviously knew what he was doing that the fear and fright were left behind. Where my stomach had once been.

Timing: 54.52 seconds. Fastest time of the day. Faster than all the old sports cars and old F1 cars and oen super-cars on hand to impress the press. What a victory! And all I had to do was sit there and enjoy it.

The Festival of Speed, at Goodwood House, takes place from 20 to 22 June. Gwynndaf Evans will drive on the special rally stage in his British championship-winning Escort.



Despite car-like cockpit and a move from 'one-box' styling, the Sintra lacks the refinement on the road of its people-carrier competitors

A car-like van or a van-like car?

Poor old Vauxhall. While every other mainstream car maker (Rover, of course, views itself as rather exclusive and therefore outside the scope of this particular discussion) had one of those useful and trendy multipurpose vehicles in its model range, the British arm of America's General Motors Corporation had nothing. And judging by the number of Ford Galaxys and Volkswagen Sharanas to be seen on Britain's roads (nevermind that great European original, the Renault Espace), there were some serious sales opportunities being missed.

If you're the last to join the people-carrier party, you need to do something a little different, otherwise no one will notice you when you make your entrance. This is one reason why the Sintra, Vauxhall's late entry, doesn't look like its European rivals with their 'one box' side profiles. Another is that the Sintra is in fact American, a Europeanised version of the latest Pontiac/Chevrolet/Oldsmobile 'minivan' (as the bigger-is-better Americans call these quite large vehicles).

Visually, the Europeanisation is a success. The Sintra looks like a Vauxhall, with the right front grille and the right detailing in the light clusters and the bumpers. But with its separate bonnet and conventional side window

Road Test Vauxhall Sintra By John Simister

shape, it looks considerably less space-age than the capular Galaxy and Espace (especially the new Espace, which is in the process of being launched in Britain). Vauxhall's view is that many people are put off by one-box styling, regarding it as too van-like. Such people miss the point – which is that the one-box is light, airy, forward-looking and deliberately unconventional – but if, instead, they would rather drive something that looks like a taxi, then that's fine by me.

Inside, we find the usual seven individual seats, the front pair of which are able to swivel round to face the rear in the CD-trim version, the rear five being foldable, slideable and easily removable thanks to their lightweight magnesium frames. When tipped forward to increase load space, springs help them to stay

tipped so they don't, like the seats in a Galaxy, crash floorwards when you accelerate. Alternatively, you can have your Sintra with a one-piece bench seat for the rear-most row, bringing the total potential occupant count to eight. All have plenty of leg space, too. The rear doors slide instead of hinging outwards, which is useful in a tight space but threatening for small fingers.

Cup-holders and storage boxes abound, but in exploring these you will uncover one of the Sintra's main flaws. Its interior is plastic, flimsy, built down to a price with bendy plastic moulded hinges and wobbly construction. Nor does one of the claimed benefits of its topologically distorted estate-car shape, that the feel from the driving seat is essentially car-like, materialise in

practice. The high, slabby dashboard blocks your view forward and downward unless you raise the seat high, in which case you won't easily reach the handbrake, which is mounted too low and too far back. The deep-windowed, snub-nosed Galaxy is much better here.

The cheapness also extends to the driving experience. Car-like looks or not, the irony is that the Sintra feels the most unhooked, the most van-like to drive of all the current MPVs. The gearchange is springy and clonky, the brakes snatch, the structure shudders, and the 2.2-litre, four-cylinder engine in the version I drove had a gritty, whining note. Balancer shafts are claimed to make it smooth, so I dread to think what it must have been like before the engineers deemed them to be necessary. For all that, though, the Sintra moves along reasonably swiftly if you keep the revs stoked up, and both the roadholding and the ride comfort are acceptable. There's also a 3.0-litre V6 version, with automatic transmission.

American cars tend to feel cheaper, flimsier, harsher than ours, and the Sintra betrays its roots. The best MPV you can buy today is the Ford Galaxy, and its Volkswagen Sharan and Seat Alhambra clones. The Sintra's arrival does nothing to change that.

Vauxhall Sintra CD 2.2i

Specifications
Prices (on the road): £19,100 (5-seat), £19,600 (7-seat). Engine: 2,198cc, four cylinders, 16 valves, 141bhp at 5,400rpm; five-speed gearbox, front-wheel drive.
Performance: top speed 117mph, 0-60 in 12.5sec. Fuel consumption: 24-28mpg.

Rivals
Chrysler Voyager 2.0 SE, £18,395: another American, good value on paper but suffering similar American ailments.
Ford Galaxy 2.0 GLX 7-seat, £19,255: smoother, quieter, more solid than the Sintra, easier in a tight spot and much more pleasant to drive.
Peugeot 806 2.0 SR, £18,980: ingenious interior with facemounted gear lever, good to drive but feels dated.
Renault Espace 2.0 RT, £19,635: the new Espace is truly avant-garde with central dials, huge storage boxes and infinite seat adjustment. Automatic only.
Toyota Previa 2.4 GS, £19,710: seats eight, looks like an egg, underfloor engine gives surprising pace. Still popular after six years.

Bumper to bumper with a built-in bar code

James Ruppert investigates the boasts of the bargain-basement nearly-new car supermarkets

It is 9am on a bright Saturday and already people are queuing to get into the supermarket. Nothing unusual in this nationwide scenario, except that this is no ordinary supermarket. It is a car supermarket which is claimed to be the biggest in Europe. Express is based in Wales, with three sites in and around Newport. The company has annual sales of 35,000 cars and an annual turnover of some £130m.

The chief reason people are crowding into its main Newport showroom is that there are hundreds of nearly-new

cars on sale. Most are N and P registered, and have covered just a few thousand miles. They have retail prices that show a considerable saving on the cost of a brand-new car. That is because the VAT and depreciation for the first year have been taken care of, with an average saving on most models of about £2,000-£3,000. A Vauxhall Vectra 2.0 GLS bought new in 1996 for £15,630, now – after covering 10,000 miles – will cost £11,995.

As you walk through the entrance to the 400-car Express showroom, with

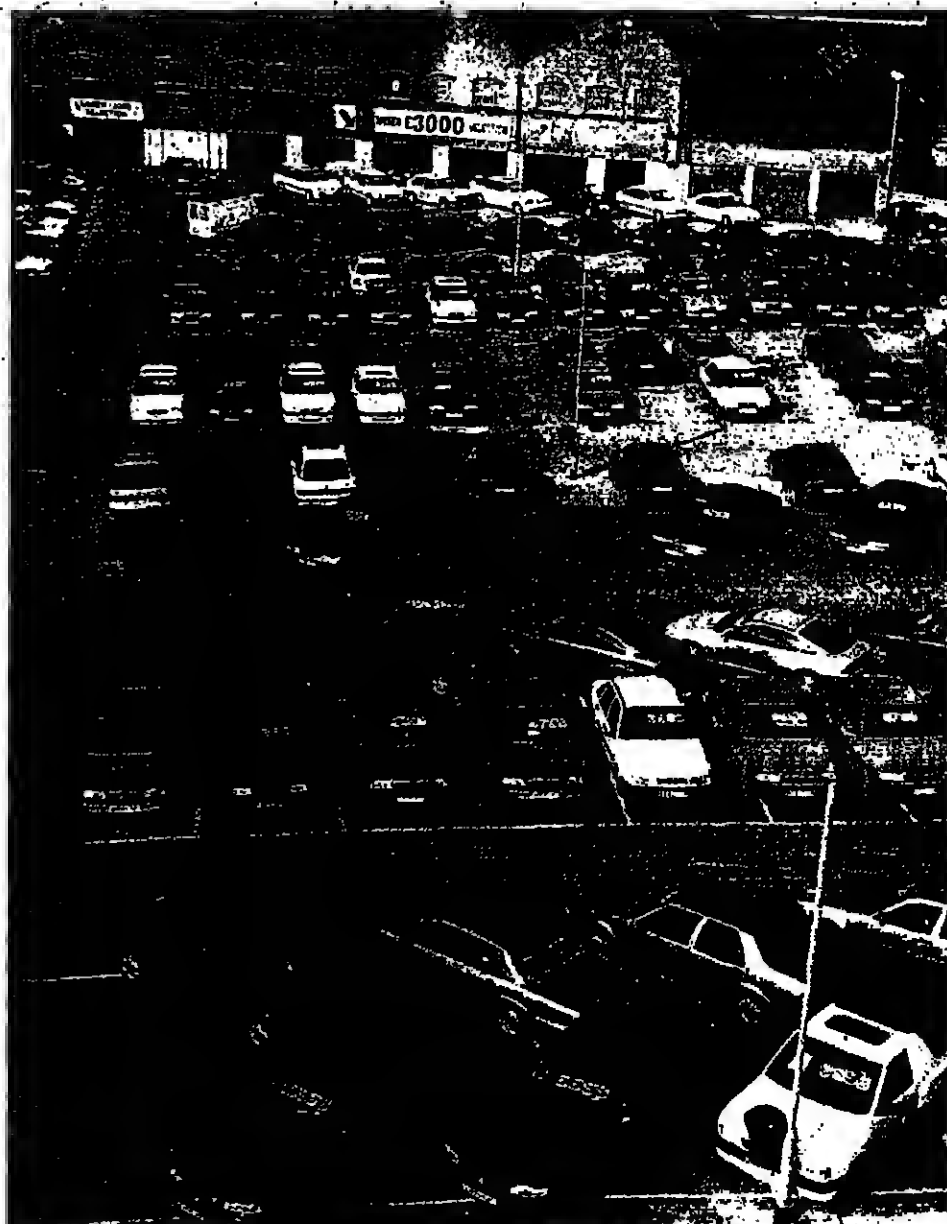
tightly packed models parked in long, neat rows, one question is begging to be asked: where on earth do they all come from? The sales manager is refreshingly open about how the company acquires these cars. "We have long-standing arrangements with some of the country's largest fleet operators. We buy direct from them at a preferential price and pass that saving on to our customers."

These fleet operators are not just the huge daily rental fleets such as Hertz, but also institutions such as NatWest Bank and various pension funds which act just like car dealers. They buy thousands of models direct from the manufacturers at large discounts, rumoured to be up to 45 per cent less than the full retail price. After staff have run the cars for a fixed period of months and miles, they are then sold at a profit and the process is repeated.

The cars are sold in reasonable condition, but sometimes can look older than they are. That is because they have been put through dozens of car washes and may be treated with little respect by their short-term owners. It is also worth keeping an eye on the mileage. A row of seemingly identical models can have very different odometer readings. Several Nissan Primers selling for £9,995 had 4,000 to 11,000-mile fluctuations, so these cars need to be selected carefully.

As for the supermarket pricing expectation, the majority of the models are pitched at trade guide prices. So, on big discounts. And the only benefit is the balance of the manufacturer's warranty. In fact, some cars I saw were a touch overpriced. A Vauxhall Corsa 1.2Ls that had covered 11,000 miles was on offer for £7,495. Yet the trade guide suggested a price nearer to £7,000, and a quick flick through some classified ads unearthed Vauxhall dealers selling identical Corsas for £6,995.

Express says prices are set to reflect the demand of the local market. Salesmen here plead tight margins and small discounts of "perhaps £200-£300". The Trade Centre's Car Supermarket, at Hythe Road near White City, London, has a similar batch of Corsas for sale at £6,799. Special edition Vegas 1.2s with just 700 miles on the clock are going for £7,599. Fiat Puntos seemed cheap here, as 1996 examples



Lot lottery? The Trade Centre's Car Supermarket in London

PHOTOGRAPH: NICK TAPSELL

started at £5,500. Their Ford Escorts were cheaper than Express examples and with lower mileages – a 1.6LX starting at £7,999 with about 5,000 miles on the clock. I tried hard to find a Ford main agent that could better this price. D.C. Cook in Bracknell was having a spring sale, but their equivalent Escort was marked down only to £9,695 from £9,995.

Ford has, in fact, been one of the principal manufacturers to embrace the nearly-new concept. The Ford Direct scheme has seen the company "remanufacture used cars" at a purpose-built facility in Essex. They take back ex-rental cars, prepare them for sale and then put a premium price on the models at Ford outlets. The more sinister side of this activity is the pre-registration of new cars to inflate monthly sales figures. Virtually

all of the mainstream manufacturers do it, but few will openly admit to the practice. That is how a car with little more than delivery miles can end up on your local forecourt. Pre-registering a car can also be a way for a dealer to discount a car to you. This can happen with the more prestigious marques, where the concept of giving money off is frowned upon. Provided, of course, that you don't mind that the "new car" had a previous dealer owner. Meanwhile, buyers of brand-new cars are on a losing wicket – mostly in terms of VAT and depreciation, which in the first year can add up to pretty crippling amounts.

For those in the nearly-new market, prices are going to be pretty much the same whether you shop at a supermarket or a dealer. The big advantage of a supermarket is that there is a

huge range of models, of all makes, to choose from. But don't be deceived into thinking that you will be getting a great bargain. Car supermarkets would like to believe that they are a one-stop car shop, but they are not. Take the time to look at local franchised dealers. They should have similar cars at similar prices, usually prepared to a higher standard and often with a more comprehensive warranty. On top of that, they may well be far more eager to please – with a competitive financial package and the all important personal touch.

Certainly there are nearly-new bargains to be had, but you must be prepared, like any wise supermarket-goer, to shop around.

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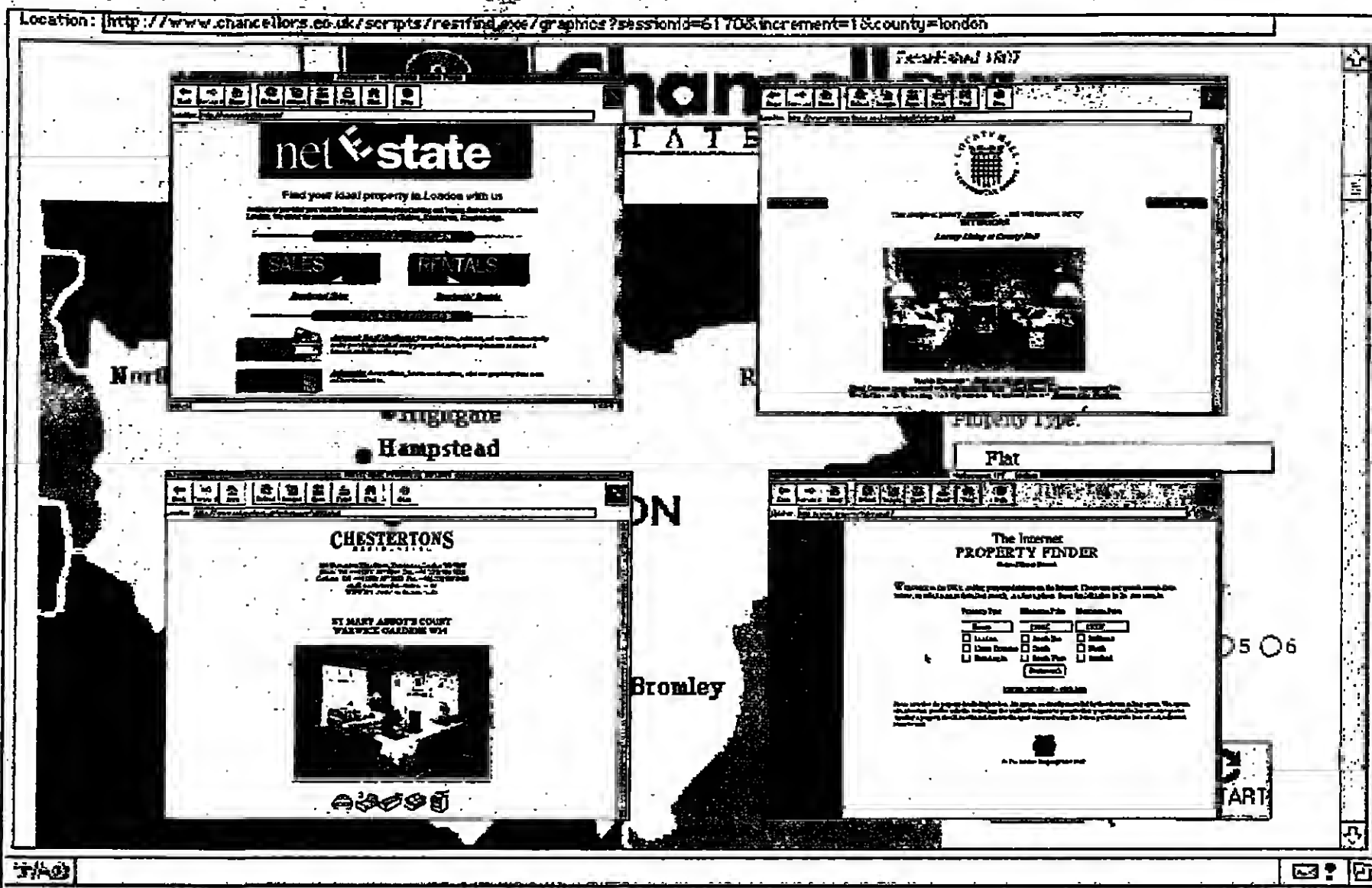
In theory the Internet could completely change the way we buy and sell houses. But how effective is it today, asks David Bowen

Head the one about the man who spent £1m on a house without ever seeing it? Well, it's true. Thanks to the Internet it is possible to find a house, examine it, put in an offer and exchange the documentation – all without stirring from a chair on the other side of the world.

The property world swirls with stories of such "cybersales" – and a handful have indeed been completed (mostly by wealthy Asians buying in central London). According to Peter Callaghan of Prestige Properties International, his Internet site has led to a Canadian finding a £1m property in Britain, a German buying a house near Cork, and a Yorkshireman finding a place in the Scillies. In each case the buyer came and saw before he bought – but the initial contact was in cyberspace.

A few deals do not make a trend, however. The question the property world is asking is whether the Internet will transform the way houses are bought and sold *en masse*. In theory, it could. The World Wide Web – the graphical part of the Internet – is like an enormous estate agent's window: anyone with a computer and a telephone line can dial into it, look for suitable properties and examine their details.

With the increasing sophistication of Internet software, it is already possible to display rooms in three dimensions, and even to offer a "virtual tour" of a property. Add to this e-mail (the bit of the Internet that carries messages) and you



Web sites may have become an important part of some estate agents' businesses, but as yet only a small percentage of the British population uses the Internet

propertyfinder.co.uk) are battling for the loyalty of the big national agents. IFF has Savills, John D Wood, Knight Frank, Strutt & Parker, Humphreys, and Cluttons, while Net Estate has Chestertons and is expected to sign up Hamptons and Fortsons. All these agents have been testing the sites out with a limited number of properties displayed – but are now moving to full-scale commitment.

These sites have a distinctly upmarket flavour. That is unsurprising, not only because the Internet is still mainly the preserve of AB types, but also because it overcomes distance. Prestige Properties International (www.zynet.co.uk) specialises in selling UK properties to foreigners, while all the big estate agents report a high proportion of enquiries coming from abroad – particularly from Asia.

Will the Internet ever cut the ground from beneath estate agents' feet? PPI collects and advertises properties directly – and users avoid paying those annoyingly chunky commissions. The agents hope that by joining the revolution they will not be swept away by it, and it will certainly be a while before most of us turn to the Internet for our next house. The trouble is, "a while" in the fast-forward Internet world, could mean no more than a couple of years.

David Bowen edits *Net Profit*, a non-technical newsletter on the business uses of the Internet (for more information call 0181-355 6836; E-mail info@net-profit.co.uk)

have a mechanism that covers the entire purchase process.

"I think it will change the nature of our business," says David Taylor, director of Chestertons Residential. "If you had a choice of walking around 15 estate agents or looking at all the properties from your home, which would you choose?" Buyers would still want to talk to people on the ground, but, he points out, such assistance need not be located in expensive High Street offices.

The same argument can be applied to other intermediaries – travel agents, retailers, banks. And

it is the experience of hanks (where tens of thousands of jobs have already been lost to technology) that has persuaded many estate agents that they cannot rest on their commissions. A few dozen have their own Web sites, while others have put properties on sites that group several portfolios together.

It is early days. Only a small percentage of the British population has ever used the Internet, and few of the sites yet have the critical mass to make much difference to the way houses are bought and sold. One that does belong to Chancellors, an Ascot-based group with offices

along the hi-tech M4 corridor, Ian Simpson, a director, says that the Internet has already become "an inherent part of our business". When Chancellors attributed its first sale to the site last autumn, it issued an excited press release. Now, he says, "we've stopped monitoring it – we have instructions and introductions coming in all the time."

Chancellors has a system that automatically puts every property for which the company get instructions on to the Web site (www.chancellors.co.uk). "If you say you want to sell your property today, it will

be displayed on the Internet at 8am tomorrow," Mr Simpson says.

Though the group has several thousand properties on its site, it has also started a site called Homefile (www.homefile.co.uk), which includes houses offered by agents in other areas. It will thus be going head to head with a number of specialist sites, all trying to become the place where potential buyers look for their new homes.

The point is that the World Wide Web is a big and unruly place. It has tens of millions of sites on it, but only a few hundred get more than a thousand or so visitors. To make

an electronic property operation work effectively, it must be easy to find, and offer the buyer the same sort of choice as he would get in the High Street. One mega-site might not be healthy, because there would be too much competition. But if, say, there were two or three well-known ones, each with tens of thousands of properties, the Web really would be a viable alternative to those Saturday morning jaunts.

Right now, a number of sites are jockeying to belong to that profitable elite. Two front-runners, Net Estate (netestate.dares.com) and InternetProperty Finder ([## Crack and ruin](http://www.</p>
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A couple of cracks in the wall and a jammed sash window can drive even the calmest householder to search through the small print of his insurance policy. Subsidence is the stuff that nightmares are made of, raising spectres of huge hills, underpinning, even total collapse.

Properties at risk are those built on shrinkable clay soil, most of which lies south of a line between Hull and Exeter. In normal weather, houses move slightly as the soil dries out towards the end of the summer and swells again with winter rain. But two unusually dry years have sent the cost of insurance claims for subsidence damage soaring, from £125m in 1994 to £331m in 1996. This year's combination of dry weather plus more properties being surveyed in an active market is likely to result in even higher claims.

But while home-owners lie awake at night listening for every creak and fearing the worst, experts are reassuring. "Almost any building on clay soil moves up and down between summer and winter," says Mike Crilly, project manager at the Building Research Establishment. "People panic when they see a crack, which is understandable, but almost all buildings crack for some reason during their lifetime. Subsidence damage shouldn't be that serious. Your house is not going to fall down. Generally its performance is hardly impaired and the damage is purely aesthetic."

Properties most susceptible are neither the oldest nor the newest, but those built between the Forties and about 1970. "Building materials were more inflexible than before, but foundations were not up to today's standards." Anyone buying a Victorian or Edwardian house can expect to live with a few cracks, many of which will appear in summer and disappear in winter.

The BRE has drawn up a classification of subsidence damage with recommendations for action. These are set out in a useful layman's guide, *Has Your House Got Cracks?* by TJ Freeman, GS Littlejohn and RMC Driscoll (published by The Institution of Civil Engineers, price £9.95). Category 0 means hairline cracks causing cosmetic damage only. If you are unfortunate enough to have cracks wider than 25mm, or the walls lean badly, the windows break and roof timbers lose their bearing, your house is in category 5 and may even fall down.

Category 2 signals the time to take action. This is when you have several

As concerns grow over droughts, Stella Bingham examines the resulting problems of subsidence

cracks at least 3mm wide, possibly on the inside only, that do not close up in winter. The solution for this fairly minor damage could be as simple as pruning or removing thirsty trees. Trees are at least partly responsible for about 80 per cent of all clay soil subsidence claims. No tree should be planted closer than 5m to a house, and willows should be at least 40m away. But pause before you reach for the axe. Removing trees may cause more problems than it solves.

"Properties on clay soils can suffer from opposite and equal perils," says Mr Crilly. "You may have heave when you remove a tree because the ground swells as it takes up water. In general, it is fine to remove trees if they are not older than the property, because the house simply goes back to where it was before the tree was planted. If the tree is older than the house, seek specialist advice."

Underpinning is very much the last resort these days. "Householders do not appreciate how much of a disruption and how expensive underpinning is... and insurers are reluctant to sanction it for most properties."

The bill for underpinning a semi could run to £20,000. Even if you are covered by insurance, you will probably have to pay the first £1,500, and your house may be uninhabitable while the work is being carried out.

Home-owners in subsidence-high-risk areas may also have to pay higher premiums, and properties with a history of subsidence can be hard to insure. "There is a very real subsidence blight once properties have had to be underpinned," says Chris Jordan, head of insurance at the Bechill-based Subsidence Claims Advisory Bureau. "A lot of insurance companies run a mile when asked to cover a property that has suffered from subsidence." The Bureau has set up its own insurance scheme, previously Underpinned Properties, or PUP, for such blighted houses.



Homes on shrinkable clay soil are most at risk from subsidence EDWARD WEBB

Subsidence damage can also be a problem when you want to sell. Mortgage lenders may be reluctant to lend on affected buildings. The Halifax, for example, will consider properties with a history of subsidence if there has been no recent movement, or if a structural engineer certifies that underpinning has done its job. Where the insurer suspects subsidence is ongoing, they will consider lending only if the house

is insurable. All of which may sound depressing, but Mike Crilly remains upbeat. "Climatic conditions are ideal for causing greater amounts of subsidence damage in the long term... and you can't underpin the entire country." "Learn to live with your cracks, as people in the period pre-insurance did. It's probably not as bad as you think."

Pick your plot and watch it grow

Buying off-plan, before a brick is laid, has big benefits, reports Stella Bingham

Last December, Paul Freeman put a deposit on a peothouse flat at Fairclough's Rainbow Quay in London's Docklands. He expects to move in before next Christmas. Paul, 25, an IT specialist, bought his new home before a brick had been laid.

"Because I got in early, I got the flat I wanted. I got a discount and I've got a year to save. I'm renting at the moment, and all I own is two sofas and a toothbrush."

When Paul paid his deposit there wasn't even a show flat to help him visualise his future home. "I had an idea of the general layout and finish from another Fairclough site, and I was happy with that. The plans were vague to start with but pretty detailed by the time we exchanged contracts. Then I had a computer package done so that I could 'walk round' the flat. Because I bought off-plan, I could make changes to the layout. I've reduced the size of the walk-in wardrobe and made the en suite bathroom bigger."

Discounts are no longer available and asking prices have already gone up at Rainbow Quay, so Paul is happy with his deal. "My advice to anyone buying off-plan would be to make sure they like the area, look at somewhere else the developers have built – and be patient."

Buying a house from the builder's plans takes nerve and imagination, but it may be the only way to get the property you want. "It's a builder's market now," says Ian Hughes, of Fairclough Homes. The development of 27 houses at St Albans sold out in two-and-a-half months, before they had had a chance to open a show house.

"Our normal strategy is to go to market with a full marketing package," says Sue Parry, of Cala Midlands. "But at the end of last year people started phoning and demanding to buy from the plans. 'It is harder work to sell off-

plan," she adds. "You have to be precise about what you are offering in terms of specifications."

"People who buy off-plan live and breathe their purchases," says Linden Homes' Andrea Fawell. "They visit other developments, making scale drawings, fitting in their own furnishings, wondering whether to make little Johnny's bedroom bigger. They often photograph the plot every week."

That was the sort of research that faced Malcolm and Helen Howard when they decided to buy a house at Trenchwood Homes' site at Kingston Bagpout, near Oxford. "We liked the look of the estate but there wasn't a show home and it was hard to visualise what the house would look like," says Helen. The Howards checked the specifications of a larger show home on a different site and measured their furniture. Finally Malcolm plotted everything on graph paper.

Satisfied, the Howards found a buyer for their old house and put down a deposit at the end of March. They expect to exchange contracts on 2 May and to move in at the end of July. "It's exciting now. The outside walls are up to head height."

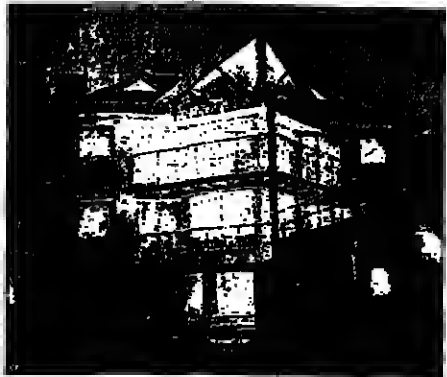
Buyers off-plan generally have to exchange contracts and pay 10 per cent of the purchase price four weeks after reserving their plot. At that stage they are given the probable mood for completion, but will know their moving day only three or four weeks ahead.

And some developers still believe that the disadvantages of selling off-plan outweigh the advantages. "We advocate opening a show home and letting the customer see what we are doing before we take sales," says Rameen Firoozan, of Laing. "That way we avoid the misunderstandings that can arise if you sell from a brochure, however careful you are."

Three on view Waterside homes



Ashford House at Shurton, nine miles from Bridgwater in Somerset, is reached by driving through a ford, three times. Visitors on foot don't have to wear wellies: there is a stone pedestrian bridge leading to the gardens. The three-bedroom, three-bathroom converted barn lies between the Bristol Channel and the Quantock hills. The gardens are mainly walled and have the brook running along the bottom. £142,750 through Greenslade Hunt (01278 425555).



Siesta Quay must be the most expensive house on Poole Harbour. The tenoo-painted, five-bedroom, five-bathroom, harbour-front house has a hand-painted kitchen with marble floors, four reception rooms, balconies with views to Brownsea Island and electronic security gates. It is being sold fully furnished for £900,000 through Lloyds (01202 708044).



Waterside Cottage, in North Warnborough, Hampshire, lies next to the Basingstoke Canal and so enjoys frequent visits from ducks and swans. The two-bedroom, end-of-terrace cottage, which is situated a mile from the mainline station at Hook, has lawns leading down to the canal bank; the towpath is on the opposite side of the canal. £105,000 through Hill & Morrison (01256 702892).

Who's been living in your house?

Find out the history of your property and you're quids in, says Rosalind Russell

When the present owner of a distinguished 19th-century house in Kensington leaves it for ever, her buyer will be handed a complete history of the property. There were no famous occupants, but — as with the provenance of a classic car — a house history is a valuable aid to selling.

The house in Neville Terrace was home to a succession of solidly middle-class, respectable types: a widow; a wine merchant; a civil engineer; a professor of music; and a colonel who had an illustrious career with the Indian police in the Punjab. It helps that the three-bedroom house, with leaded bow windows and staff flat, is such a substantial affair. Cluttons is asking £985,000 for the freehold. The histories of other homes with a faster turnover — where some tenants may have wished to avoid the official census — are harder to track.

"It helps a sale a great deal to know the history of the property," says Philip Green, of Goldschmidt and Howland. "We have a research department specifically to find out the history before we put a house on the market. An interesting history may encourage more viewers, leading to competitive bidding."

Blue-plaque houses have a slight edge on their neighbours, even though no one may have a clue about the allegedly important former occupant. G&H are currently selling a £1.1m house in Howley Place, London W2, with a blue plaque dedicated to the Indian philosopher Thak Lokamanya. More famously, the composer Gustav Holst lived in The Manse — then called The Steps — a Grade II* listed townhouse in Thaxted, Essex. Here he wrote his choral symphony. The four-

bedroom house is on the market through Bruce Munro at £260,000.

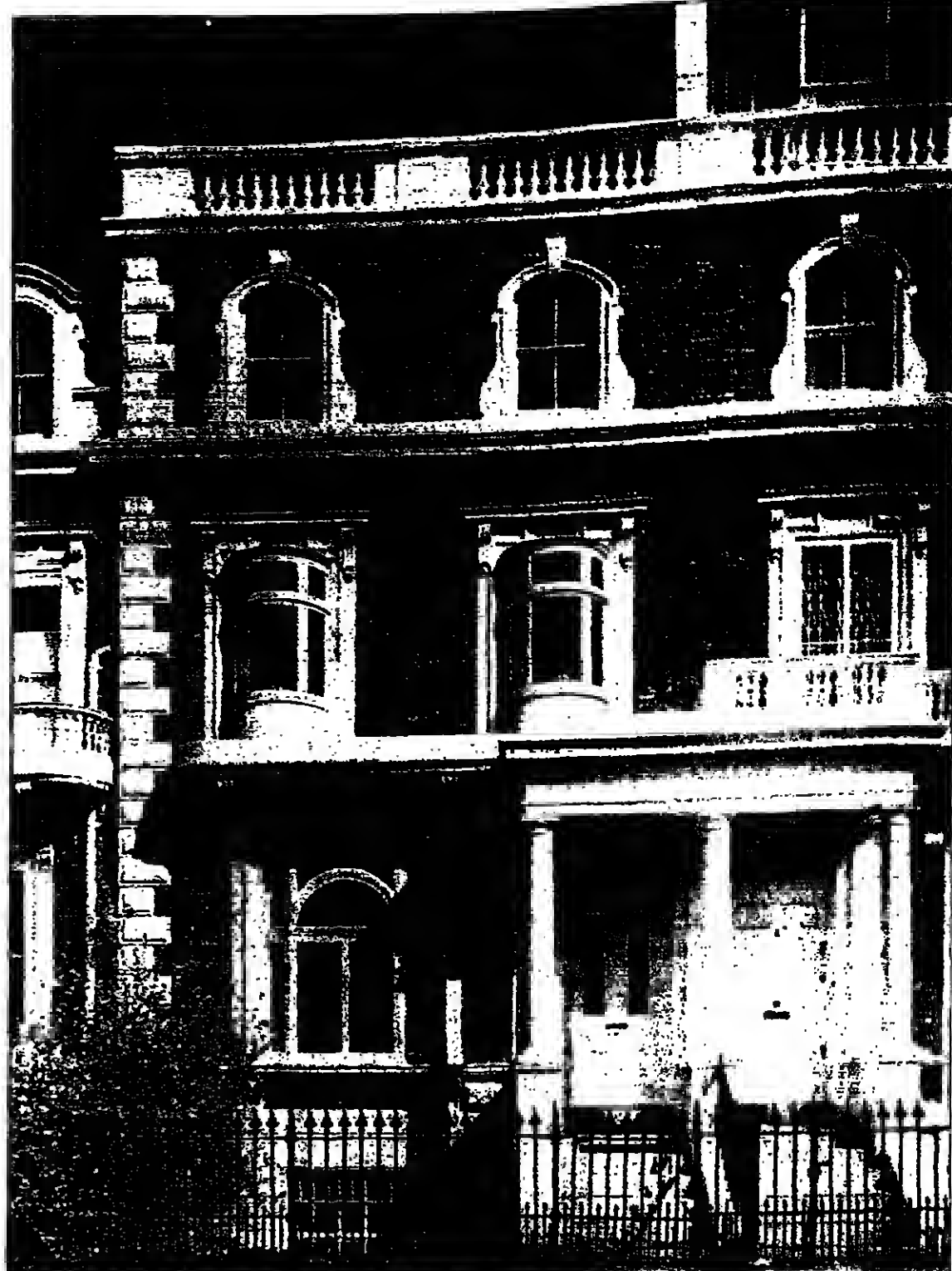
Notorious "black plaque" addresses can be no less attractive, says Philip Green cheerfully. "We have sold houses where people have been murdered ... one, in fact, where someone was hacked to death in the hall. It's something to talk about at your dinner parties."

But murders are acceptable only if there's been a decent interval between the police moving out and you moving in. Owners who pay to have the history of their homes researched want more for their money than a list of clean-living bankers, barristers and accountants. Adulterers, forgers, embezzlers and bigamists provide richer dinner-party fare.

Which owner of 9 Berkeley Street, Mayfair, could resist dropping in conversation that the house was once lived in by Elizabeth Howard, mistress of James Mason — the jockey who won the first Grand National in 1839 — and later of Louis Napoleon, emperor of France? A flat in Portico Hall near Hyde Park, on the market through Chestertons at £127,500, may pick up extra viewers because the spy Anthony Blunt lived in the block, and Lord George Brown also had a flat there.

"The past is powerful in us all," says Colin Style, a professional house history researcher. "And people get curious about their homes, once they've moved in." He and his wife O-Lan have spent nine years digging up the secrets of homes from Middlesex to Cornwall. "It can be deadly dull," warns Colin. "You may find generations living serene and harmonious lives with not a hint of vivid drama."

Researchers charge several hundred pounds for a full history. "People



Neville Terrace in Kensington: an interesting history attracts viewers

are sometimes surprised at the cost, but it may take two of us two weeks. Imagine what it would cost to have the plumber in that long." You can research the history yourself, but it can be confusing if you don't know where to look. Some parish records are more complete than others, but the census office is a good starting-point. Some Norman, French and med-

ieval Latin could also be useful, suggests Colin, and a good eye for deciphering bad handwriting and erratic spelling. Their own house turned out to hold some unwelcome surprises. "We thought it was Georgian, but then found a map that showed it as a blank space in 1887. In fact it is a Victorian cottage, built in 1902."

And what about worries over former occupants who won't go away? Ghosts, he says, are out as far as clients are concerned. "People really do not want to know about them. But after we'd had some damp-proofing done in our house, I was standing in the kitchen when I felt a rush of warm air and heard an old lady's voice chattering in my ear. I have to tell you it made my hair stand on end."

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No one swallows this tax propaganda

Is tax an issue for you in this election? All the main political parties seem to think it is one of the central issues on which the result will turn. As a result, the air is thick with striking but mostly highly ideological and misleading propaganda about what has happened to taxes during the term of the current Government – and which party will do more damage to your welfare if it is elected.

Who is right? And does it matter? My view has always tended to be that much of the propaganda about tax at election times is a waste of time, in the sense that most people know perfectly well from their own experience whether their tax payments – and the proportion of their income that they pay in tax – have or have not gone up. They also have a very shrewd idea of which party is more likely to hit them harder with taxation in the future.

So, for example, all the rhetoric which the Tories continue to expound on extolling their efforts to cut income tax rates is unlikely, surely, to fool anyone. Most voters know – because they have seen it with their own eyes – how sharp cuts in the rate of tax can quite easily sit alongside an increase in the



Jonathan Davis

overall burden of taxation. What is given back with lower tax rates can quite easily be taken away again in the form of higher VAT, increased national insurance contributions, or reduced allowances, and so on. That is exactly what has happened in the last five years.

Similarly, one assumes, not many people can really be taken in by the Labour Party's superficially attractive attempts to paint themselves as the party of low and fervent fiscal rectitude. Most people who will vote for Labour will do so with their eyes open, in the knowledge that they are voting for a party which in practice, and for all its fine words, is likely to end up spending proportionately more in real terms on public spending over time than the Tories.

Both parties have exceeded themselves in picking the data to serve their political agendas

It may well be what most people want. But, even if Labour sincerely wants to keep to Tory public spending targets, the odds must be that they will fail to manage it in practice – not least because the spending targets themselves are remarkably tight.

Having made this bold assertion that nobody – surely – is fooled by all the nonsense talked on tax, one does still wonder if it is right and not just because the main political parties clearly think it worth spending millions on pushing their unconvincing tax arguments.

As the Institute of Fiscal Studies points out in its admirable election briefing document this week, both the main political parties have exceeded themselves this time in

picking data which best serves their own political agendas. Thus Labour tells us that the typical family has paid more than £2,000 in extra taxes since 1992, while the Tories say that the average family is £1,100 a year better off than at the time of the last election.

Both claims are right and wrong at the same time – largely because they are based on different assumptions. The Tories look at the overall net income of people, implicitly accepting the credit for the performance of the economy and earnings during their time in office.

Labour in turn naturally prefers to focus solely on the changes in taxation which the

Government has made, especially in its two tax-raising Budgets of 1993 and 1994. It is easier to point the finger of blame at the Government if you choose to stick to taxes alone.

The truth as always lies somewhere in the middle. As the IFS shows, people on the whole are better off than they were five years ago because their incomes have continued to grow in real terms. But the absolute tax bill they face, and the overall share of taxation within the economy, has also risen over the last five years, though the precise amount depends on the starting date you use.

The percentage of gross domestic product taken up in

taxation and national insurance contributions has risen from its low point of 33.75 per cent in 1993-94 to a planned 36.25 per cent in the financial year just ended.

On a strictly five-year view, the Tory record on taxation naturally does not look good. As my table shows, the Government deliberately raised taxes in its three middle years in office and cut them at either end, which just happens to be around election years. One reason it had to raise taxes, apart from the fallout from the European exchange rate mechanism debacle, was because it had engaged in a fatal combination of excessive tax cuts and large public spending increases just before the 1992 election.

It is probably no coincidence that the 1992 election looked to be pretty close, making some old-fashioned pre-election bribery seem a highly reasonable investment. This time around, with Mr Major well behind in the polls, the incentive for engaging in flagrant electoral bribery is paradoxically much more limited.

Of all the interesting data assembled by the IFS, electors in my view still need to hang on to one other home truth. It is that the overall level of taxation in

the UK is still substantially below the average for the rest of Europe.

After years when it seemed to grow relentlessly, the proportion of economic activity accounted for by public spending has also been falling faster than in the rest of Europe, and is now (at 37 per cent) only marginally above the average for the OECD as a whole. Criticisms of the Tory record on taxes have therefore to recognise that the increases they have made started from a relatively low base.

The flip side of this is that voters know they can vote for higher taxes this time round without necessarily risking the dangerously high taxation levels of many other European countries.

As issues go, in other words, tax is not such a big deal in the overall scheme of things as it is made out to be. A pity that the same cannot automatically be said about the outlook for investors, who are faced, if Labour wins, not only with a windfall tax on the privatised utilities (now largely priced into the market), but also the threat of further restrictions on advance corporation tax credits, which as I said last week could have a serious dampening effect on the stock market.

Revenue effects of Budget changes this parliament



Jobless with a mortgage to pay

Hilary Freeman discovers there are new snags

The introduction of the Jobseekers' Allowance last October has created a new set of problems and fears for claimants who have taken out insurance policies to help pay mortgages and insurance premiums.

Under the previous benefit system, those receiving unemployment benefit were not means-tested until a year after making their claim. Now, it comes into effect after a six-month period of unemployment. Since mortgage protection policy payments are regarded as income, despite the fact that most pay out only enough to cover mortgage payments and insurance policy premiums, policyholders find their state benefits cut. Those receiving income support, or Jobseekers' Allowance, as it is now known, are means-tested from the start of their claim.

Many borrowers who took out mortgage protection policies to protect their mortgages after October 1995, when the Government ruled out direct financial help with mortgage payments for the first nine months of unemployment, feel they have walked into a trap.

Tony Baker, deputy director general of the Association of British Insurers, says although policyholders may be worse off in the short term, means-tested payouts are better than none. "You must bear in mind most people have found another job within six months. Earlier means testing should not create any difficulties."



Benefit trap: Claimants with mortgage protection policies can find themselves in a vicious circle

ment protection insurance the ABI aimed to standardise this by demanding that all insurers agree to one definition of the term. But the Jobseekers' Allowance now leaves it up to the Employment Service Adviser to decide whether the claimant meets the "actively seeking work" criteria.

If, at bi-weekly interviews, a claimant is not considered to be doing enough, his benefits will be stopped. It remains to be seen what effect this arbitrary definition of "actively seeking work" will have on insurance claims and how often it will comply with the insurers' new standardised definition. To date, insurers have said that they will review each case on its individual merits.

The Jobseekers' Allowance has also thrown up a new term – "employment on trial". If a claimant has not found a suitable job within 13 weeks, he will be encouraged to take any available, reasonable job. He or she must stay in this job for at least four weeks, but if it proves unsuitable, may leave within 12 weeks, without penalty and with a resumption of benefits.

Since mortgage protection policies do not cover voluntary redundancy however, this new scheme has created a dilemma for insurers.

The ABI says the scheme should be seen as a temporary job and not affect payments. But the onus is on policyholders to inform their insurers they are taking a job "on trial".

But means-testing can create an administrative vicious circle. The DSS treats claimants with mortgage policies in a separate "new claims" unit, and will not calculate the benefits to which the claimant is entitled until it is aware how much the payment protection plan will pay out. Since most insurers will not make a decision on entitlement of payout for at least a month after the claimant has registered as unemployed, the claimant could find himself facing a period when he receives neither state benefits nor mortgage protection.

The private insurance sector relies on the public sector to kick-start the claims process. Before policy payments can be made, the local job centre must complete a section of the

insurance claim form, proving the claimant is unemployed. This means claims are initially dealt with by gatekeepers who have little knowledge of mortgage protection policies, leaving the power to decide whether someone qualifies for payments in the hands of front-line administrative staff at Job Centres.

At one benefits office, a claimant was told that as he was not yet receiving income support, the official would not sign the form stating he was unemployed. This led to a delay in mortgage protection policy payments to which he was fully entitled.

Under the terms of payment protection policies, claimants must state they are "actively seeking work". In its statement of practice for pay-

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Retiring types

The Agerbaks want to buy a home and ensure a decent income. Adviser Paul Gauntlett tells how

Tim and Linda Agerbak had a full financial review carried out for them by an independent financial adviser, on a fee basis, in April 1995. The purpose was to ensure they would have an adequate income after Tim's proposed retirement in the summer of 1999 at the age of 60. Their primary objectives at present are as follows:

- The purchase of a home for their retirement costing, say, £100,000.
- A retirement income, net of tax, of just over £15,000 a year in today's terms.
- To use reinvestment relief to defer part of the chargeable capital gain arising from their Cheltenham & Gloucester "windfall" in August 1995.
- To keep their investments on track following on from the advice they received in 1995, particularly if there proves to be a bumpy ride ahead on the stock market.

Tim and Linda have a portfolio of deposits, National Savings, traded endowment policies, gilts unit trusts and PEPs. These are geared to growth rather than income. The likely income shortfall needs to be more accurately established between Tim's age 60 and 65 and thereafter.

Between now and 1999, when Tim is 60, the PEPs can be transferred into equity income funds with a view to providing rising tax-free income with, hopefully, protection of capital against inflation.

With the need to buy a retirement home for £100,000 in mind Tim and Linda have just realised £28,000 from one of their equity linked investments and have over £100,000 in building society deposits. They have purchased three traded endowment policies (costing about £63,000) and set aside £40,000 of the building society cash to cover the purchase of a

retirement home. After allowing for this purchase, Tim and Linda have about £170,000 invested, ample to provide the extra income required, even at the relatively low initial yield available from a balanced equity portfolio. They need not therefore feel threatened by short-term stock market volatility.

Of the £100,000 on building society deposit, £40,000 will need to be retained in cash since the house purchase is likely in the next two years. This can also serve as an emergency reserve in the interim. The balance can be used to start a Tessa for Tim, make the 1997/98 PEP investments and take advantage of any opportunities which may arise - particularly if a fall in stock market valuations provides a good window in which to invest for long-term income and growth.

Their current annual expenditure exceeds £21,000. However, once Tim retires, and they move into their new home, they will save over £6,000 a year in rent and pension contributions. This indicates a required net income of £15,000 per annum or so. An updated forecast of likely pensions is now needed.

At the time of the last review these were estimated as Tim £11,915 and Linda £1,925 per annum. After tax, this indicates a joint pension income of about £12,400. Further income of £2,500-£3,000 per annum will need to be generated from investments and this will need to be protected against inflation as far as possible.

Even though he has taught overseas from time to time he will undoubtedly have accrued some state pension entitlement in the UK, payable from the age of 65. Tim should immediately complete and send form BR19 to the Benefits Agency to request a retirement pension forecast. It may well be the case that the Agerbaks' initial



Ensuring their future: Tim and Linda Agerbak are planning ahead to avoid a rocky retirement

PHOTOGRAPH: ROB STRATTON

objective from their investments will be to provide a bridging income until Tim's state pension starts at age 65, whereupon things can be reviewed again.

Linda is receiving no retirement pension but should check whether she has any entitlement. Meanwhile, Tim should continue as he is now, paying maximum additional voluntary contributions (AVCs) to tax-efficiently boost his prospective occupational pension.

Tim and Linda's joint account with the Cheltenham & Gloucester produced a windfall in excess of their annual capital gains tax exemptions and they paid over £1,700 in CGT. They are waiting to see what indexation relief may be available following Clark White-

hill's successful challenge to the Inland Revenue (*The Independent*, 5 February 1997).

Meanwhile though, as Quakers, the couple have a strong desire to see that their investments are ethically sound and were delighted to be able to make a small investment in a wind farm co-operative in Cumbria known as Baywind. This qualifies under the Enterprise Investment Scheme (EIS) for income tax relief at 20 per cent and they can also elect to defer part of their C&G capital gain by reinvesting under this EIS.

Such an investment would normally be considered unduly risky for a couple like the Agerbaks but they have taken comfort from Baywind's 15-year contract under the

Government's 000-fossil fuel obligation (NFFO). Under EIS rules it is possible to defer capital gains tax where the chargeable capital gain is reinvested (in part or whole) into qualifying shares within three years of the date of the original gain (which must be after 29 November 1994). They should however bear in mind that CGT is deferred rather than avoided.

Consideration ought to be given to the inheritance tax (IHT) implications of the current wills, which are wholly in favour of each other. This is entirely understandable but not very tax-efficient as it will result in a tax liability on the last death which could be avoided if use is made of the "nil-rate band" of IHT on each death. This

involves leaving some assets on the first death to beneficiaries other than the surviving spouse.

They may well feel uncomfortable with this since this course of action could leave the surviving spouse short of income. The answer may be to leave assets under a discretionary trust from which the remaining spouse could potentially benefit.

Finally, thought should be given to how the cost of long-term care may be met, should this be required. Both regular premium and single premium insurance arrangements are widely available.

Paul Gauntlett can be contacted at IEA Moors, Marr Bradley on 01908-66228.



loose change

If you don't think you can follow the guides to filling in tax forms the Inland Revenue is sending out, you could send for a 90-page guide, *Tax Self-Assessment Made Easy*, by Stefan Bernstein. Send cheques payable to TTL, PO Box 200, Harrogate HG1 2YR, and mention *The Independent* to get a discount price of £4.99 including p&p.

John Charcol has introduced a two-stage, five-year fixed rate mortgage, fixed at 6.99 per cent until April 1999, followed by a variable rate until April 2002, capped at a maximum of 7.99 per cent but with no lower limit during that period. The funds are provided by a leading mutual society currently charging a standard variable rate of 6.99 per cent. Insurance is not compulsory, loans are up to 90 per cent of valuation on purchases, 80 per cent on remortgages. There is a redemption penalty of 3.5 per cent of the loan for redemption within five years. Call 0800 718 194 for details.

NatWest Bank is offering readers a free 32-page windfall share guide, discussing the pros and cons of buying, selling or holding the shares. PEPs, the tax implications and who may be next to demutualise. Call 0800 200 400 8am-8pm Monday-Friday, 9am-6pm on Saturday to reserve a copy.

Bradford & Bingley Building Society is also offering a free guide to windfalls. Call 0800 570 800.

Investco is offering a free guide to PEPs and windfalls. Call 0800 010 310. Investors can transfer windfall shares into the Investco PEP or sell them to buy units in the PEP. Each transfer will cost £15 and investors retaining shares will be asked to invest an extra £1,000 or £35 a month.

TSB has cut the rate on personal loans of £10,000-£15,000 to 13.5 per cent APR.

Pearl Assurance is offering Platinum Bond, a unitised with-profits bond with no initial charge, no surrender charge after five years, and full return of investments on death. Bonuses are added daily.

Woolwich is raising rates on its Premier 30 account by up to 0.4 per cent from the end of April. Cater Allen bank has raised rates on one to five years. On minimum sums of £10,000 it offers 6.375 per cent gross for a year, 7 per cent for four years and 7.125 per cent for five years.

Don't sell those shares yet

Clifford German on what to do with Norwich Union windfalls

The 2.9 million members of Norwich Union have until 11am next Thursday to vote by post on whether they want the Norwich Union to convert into a public company and scatter £400 worth of free shares to members.

If they miss the postal deadline they can vote at the EGM at the Loddoo Arena next Friday. It needs 75 per cent of the votes cast to be in favour of the conversion plan. If it is approved Norwich Union would issue a prospectus in May and become a public company in June.

Norwich Union clearly hopes as many as possible of its members will keep the free shares they will receive and even add to them by buying extra shares at a discount in the public offer which follows the free issue.

The more shares the public takes up, the fewer will be available for institutions and the scarcer and more valuable the shares will become.

Members will be able to sell their free shares immediately for cash if they want to. But unless there is a dramatic collapse in share prices the general opinion is that they will make a good investment, especially as Norwich Union will be one of the 40 biggest public companies in the country and will join the FTSE 100 within a month of flotation.

This means that institutional investors and tracker funds will need to hold Norwich Union shares, and as small investors will hold at least 70 per cent of the shares in issue after the float, institutions will need to buy heavily to boost their holdings.

Small investors who want to keep their shares will have 42 days from receipt of their shares to put them into a PEP, where they will be exempt from income tax on the dividends and any possible capital gains tax on future disposals.

At least a dozen fund managers have by now said they will accept windfall shares into a general PEP, either on their own or alongside other shares.

The downside is, of course, that no one can have more than one general PEP each year and anyone who has started making contributions to a general PEP since 5 April will not by definition be able to open another one until April 1998.

Norwich Union members

who lose their general PEP entitlement in this way, and any who want to buy extra shares should consider putting them into a single company PEP. Investors can have only one PEP invested in the shares of a single company each year, but under Inland Revenue rules the free shares have an initial value so up to £3,000 worth of extra shares in the same company can be put into a single company PEP.

The public offer of extra shares in Norwich Union makes it a logical candidate for a single company PEP. By opening a single company PEP investors leave themselves free to hold a general PEP with another provider, perhaps to contain their windfall shares from a building society.

Norwich Union has no immediate plans to provide share dealing services however, unlike Halifax, which intends to use its conversion to a bank with 8 million shareholders as a platform to provide share-dealing services.

Halifax will launch a Shareholder Account to hold share certificates for Halifax shareholders and a will offer a cheap share-dealing service for those who want to sell.

The shareholder account will eventually be extended to serve as a nominee account holding shares in other companies.

Meanwhile members of Alliance & Leicester who failed or were unable to get their replies back in time to have their shares parcelled up for immediate sale have now been given until April 15 to sell them free of charge.

But most City folk think the shares will appreciate as soon as trading starts on 21 April, so a few days delay in selling could easily pay for the dealing charge on subsequent sales.

Those who want to hold their shares may be better off by waiting. They can claim the shares at any time although they have only 42 days from the official distribution date to put them into a PEP without incurring dealing charges.

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Party time for punters

A bet on a Labour win could prove as safe as any other investment, writes Rachel Fixsen

What's the difference between investment and gambling? One is for the prudent, the other for moments of downright recklessness - right?

Perhaps, though the line between the two sometimes seems thin - especially when you find yourself stung by the plummeting price of a sure share bet. With the ultimate "sure bet" looming in less than three weeks, why not forget serious investments for a spell and have a real flutter? Betting on a Labour victory at the general election on 1 May seems safer than some "investments" do offer.

The odds on a Labour win are short, but if you feel sure Tony Blair will be the new incumbent at 10 Downing Street, a bookie could give you a decent return on your stake. William Hill and Ladbrokes are offering odds of 1-7 on Labour winning the most seats. This means for a stake of £7 (and 63p with betting tax at 9 per cent) a win would give you £1 plus your stake back. Taking the tax into account your return over the next three weeks would be 4.85 per cent - if Labour won. This adds up to an annual rate of return of about 84 per cent.

If you believe John Major will beat the opinion polls, as he did in 1992 and win the vote, you can get odds of 4-1 from either bookmaker. Odds of a Liberal Democrat win are 800-1.

Simon Clare, election betting manager at Ladbrokes, says all the money is going on the size the

Labour majority will be, rather than whether the party will win. "Nobody is backing any Tory majority at all," Mr Clare says.

Shortest odds - 9-2 - are being offered for a Labour majority of 81-100 seats. Some punters are betting on 221-240, where the odds are 25-1, Mr Clare says.

Serious money has already been placed though most election betting is expected nearer polling day.

"We've had £95,000 from a punter who's had a double, combining a bet that Labour will win the most seats with a bet that (Glasgow) Rangers will win the Scottish Premier Division," says William Hill spokesman Graham Sharpe. This individual stands to make a clear profit of £13,000 if her predictions come true. Bookmakers expect election betting to total £20m this year.

Spread betting is a form that sprang up 14 years ago. It packages betting into the format City traders use to deal in stocks and was aimed at traders to begin with. City Index, Labrokes and William Hill Index offer spread betting.

"It started as a hobby for people who worked in the City... but it has reached a much wider audience now," says City Index spokesman Paul Austin.

In some ways it straddles the line between betting and investing and is regulated by the Securities and Futures Association, unlike standard betting which has no official regulator.

This is how it works. In election spread betting, you bet on the size



A political pundit: Bookies are offering 1-7 on a Labour win

of majority you expect a certain party to win. The betting shop offers a range, or spread, representing the majority it expects the party to gain.

You then have two choices - bet the party will get above or below the range. If you bet above the range and the party wins more seats than the range suggested, you win your stake multiplied by every seat the party wins above the top of the range.

So if you bet £10 above City Index's spread for Labour's majority, which is 368-374 seats and Labour subsequently wins 400 seats in parliament you win £260. But if Labour manage only 300 seats you have to pay £680. You never hand over your stake, as clients set up credit facilities with the companies.

While you're weighing up the odds of Labour winning, don't forget to take a look at any shares you own. Some stocks might not take kindly to a change of government, analysts say.

Utilities, including water, telecommunications and gas, are bound to sustain injuries if Labour's proposed windfall tax becomes law. "If Labour were to win there might be 2-3 per cent downside," says Philip Wolsten-

croft, equity strategist at securities house Merrill Lynch.

Over time, general tax rates and corporate tax rates would be likely to go up under Labour, says Mr Wolstencroft. This would be bad for share prices generally.

Worries that Labour might step up dividend taxation have started to nudge the markets. Analysts say these fears are groundless, but extra dividend tax would hit high-yield stocks.

A Labour win may not be bad news all round for equities. Some market players believe bus companies like National Express or Stagecoach could be winners if a Blair administration opts to back public transport. Manufacturers could benefit if corporate tax was reformed in their favour.

"A lot of these equities market issues will not be decided on election day. The Budget will and this will come some weeks later," says George Hodgson, equity strategist at SBC Warburg.

So will voters decide it is Time For A Change, or will they make sure The Others Don't Ruin It? Roll up and place your bets in the betting shop or the stock market. But remember - three weeks is a very long time in politics.

When pension plans go bad

Many readers have called The Independent this week to ask what they can do about the poor pension plans they realise they have been sold without understanding how high the charges levied by the providers are in the early years of a policy's life, or how much they would lose if they have to stop contributing or even surrender policies because of illness, unemployment, divorce or having a family, or any of the other uncertainties of life.

In practical terms the answer is not much, unless they have proof that pension salesmen failed to record evidence while compiling their fact-finds that pension products would be unsuitable. The charges levied in the early years and the high penalties for early lapsing of a pension plan are almost certainly in the small print somewhere. For most people the best advice now is to try to keep the pension going until retirement.

They could however ease their pain by writing to the Pensions Ombudsman and the Personal Investment Authority. Neither may be able to do much about individual cases, but several thousand letters on their door mat would provide irresistible proof of the need for reform.

The Independent does believe it has the proof required to show that there is an ongoing problem of mis-sold pensions, and that some companies behave notably better than others. Charges are only part of the arithmetic that decides how big a pension an employee will eventually receive out of a set contribution, and the investment performance will be much more important if pension plans are allowed to run for 20 years or more. But we believe there is a strong moral and practical case for pension providers to restructure their charges so that early lapsers get a better deal. If that cannot be done for existing policies and we suspect it could, it must certainly be done for new policies starting from the earliest possible date.

We also think that there is a strong case for the industry to devise a blueprint for a new, clear, comprehensible and above all cheap personal pension plan with charges more evenly spread throughout the life of the plan, and with built-in flexible periods when holders can reduce contributions to a token level at times when they are out of work or are working for an employer with a more attractive company scheme.

Clifford German finds there is often little redress

That blueprint should become the basis for a standard policy. Without it the latest revelations can only increase the reluctance of individuals to take out a pension plan to meet the undeniable need to provide for their own pensions in future. If the industry cannot do it, perhaps Government can.

Government must in any case play its part by changing the Inland Revenue rules that now oblige an employee to cease contributions to a personal pension if he or she wants to join an employer's pension scheme.

No one suggests anyone should get full tax relief simultaneously on two pensions but tax relief should certainly be available on a token

contributions needed to keep a personal pension scheme ticking over, against the day when the employee might want to reactivate it.

Employers could also help by agreeing to contribute to personal pension schemes as well as company schemes, thereby giving employees a fairer choice whether to join a company scheme or continue with their portable pension plan.

Too many employers take the view that employees with a personal pension can look after themselves and there is no need for the employer to match the contributions he would make to a company scheme.

There is no time to waste. It is essential individuals provide for their own future pensions. But it is foolish to try to force people to join pension schemes when the formula is frequently so unsatisfactory.

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Desirable objects: instant profits

Collect to invest: John Windsor on how to cash in on limited editions

Some of today's limited-edition collectables increase in value almost as soon as they leave the shops. Fountain pens, first-edition novels, records, CDs, telephone and trading cards and classic cars can turn a quick profit for a buyer in the know.

This year, a twin set of fountain pens called Peter and Catherine the Great is retailing for £1,300. By the end of the year it will be selling at Bonhams, the Loodoo auctioneers, for £1,600-£1,800.

There are three reasons for the premium value: the twin set is by Montblanc, German makers of the world's best-known brand of quality pens; supply is limited to 4,810 (Mont Blanc's height in metres); such special editions are annual, making them a must for fountain pen collectors wanting complete runs (this happens to be the first twin).

When, as recently as 1992, Montblanc issued its first limited edition pen, the Lorenzo de Medici, knowledgeable collectors snapped it up, sensing correctly that they were in at the start of something lucrative. At auction, even in its first year, the splendid pen sustained its £850 retail price and the year after was fetching £1,100 – a sign that the time taken for some contemporary collectables to acquire added value was shortening drastically.

They are now worth £3,000 mint and boxed in factory condition – a 350 per cent increase in five years. Subsequent Montblanc annual limited editions have earned more modest premiums but are still nice little earners: the Octavian of 1993, also £850 retail, commands £1,500-

£2,000 at auction, and is still a good investment.

Pitfalls for speculators: uneven allocation by fountain pen manufacturers, leading to premium prices in some countries and discounting in others.

Investment tip: Dunhill's first limited edition pen, the Namiki, with lacquer designs hand-painted by named Japanese artists, issued last year in four editions of 200, prices £820 to £5,200 for a special in powdered gold. Dunhill's original Namikis of the Thirties can fetch over £5,000 at auction.

Sheer quality can yield instant profit. How's your literary discernment, for instance? In the past decade, auction prices for mint-condition first editions complete with dustwrappers of John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* have dropped by half from their peak £400-£500.

Critical consensus has hoicked the dealers' price of first editions of Irving Welsh's 1994 paperback *Transpotting* – only about 1,000 were printed – to £500 from its retail price of £4.99. Six months ago, before its Oscar-winning film debut, Michael Ondaatje's novel *The English Patient*, could be had for £25. Now it is £300. Original retail price in 1992: £14.99.

Tip from Joanna Herald, a partner in the Ulysses bookshop in Museum Street, central Loodoo: *Silk* by Alessandro Baricco, published by Harvill Press, still in print at £9.99 hardback, £6.99 paperback. Her recommendation is based entirely on literary merit.

When you consider that book collectors of the Twenties and Thirties went barny over first editions of Galsworthy (there's nothing new in first-edition speculation), you might consider that "take the money and run" is the best strategy in those limited-edition markets in which taste is volatile.

An example is the Swatch market, deliberately exploited by its cunning and humorous creator, Nicolas Hayek. He conducts a world-wide battle of wits in which collectors' and dealers' faxes, telephones and Internet modems throb with the latest rumours about rare, just-issued design variants worth tens of thousands of pounds, and

Hayek's capricious allocations of "specials" that rocket or plummet in value in different countries.

Joseph Falcone, who trades in Swatches from his shop in the Meridian Hotel, Piccadilly, London, tells the cautionary tale of a Scot who fought his way through the scrum at Harrods' sell-out launch of the Swatch Christmas special, "Roi Soleil", in 1993, having heard that the limited allocation would instantly be worth big money. He bought two for £45 each and was gratified to see them changing hands for £150 minutes before leaving the store. He did not know that, oddly enough, the Swatch shop in Oxford Street still had plenty for sale – at £45.

Six months later, when Mr Falcone offered him £75 each for his two, he reported he had sold them for £60 each, the best price he could get. His trip from Scotland with his girlfriend had cost him £600. Dealers now sell Roi Soleils for £185-£200. The trade price is £100.

On the other hand, a Swatch collector holidaying in Madrid paid a mere £10 for a mint and boxed 1987 "Puff" – one of only 120 made, with blow-away rabbit fur around the dial – having spotted it in a cardboard box in a shop. He sold it that year, 1993, for £18,500. Puffs now sell for £20,000-£25,000. Moral: to play the Swatch market, do it at home.

Records and CDs, by comparison, are child's play. John Reed, research editor of *Record Collector* magazine, which publishes the biennial *Rare Record Price Guide* (£19.95), recommends buying into indie groups' records. Their small-circulation "lo-fi" records turned out in bedrooms or four-track recorders and not sold by the big retailers and can rapidly acquire rarity value.

Lee Phelps, co-manager of Energy, mail-order record and CD dealers of Looe, Cornwall, is selling for £50 copies of Baby Bird's CD, *I Was Born A Man* – issued only 18 months ago. Spice Girls? Their limited edition second CD of last August, with fancy fold-out, which retailed at £3.99, is worth £20. Packs of glossy trading cards showing film stars and sportsmen include sparsely distributed "chase" cards that instantly acquire street value. Like Swatches, they are an example of managed rarity. A 3D double-size Pamela Anderson "case topper" card – one per case of 360 packs – is worth £50-£60 to collectors.

Most poignant case topper, according to the publisher-importer Barry Roness: personally signed Playboy cards of Ernest Hemingway's granddaughter Margaux

Hemingway, model and actress. She was found dead in Los Angeles last July after suffering from bulimia and alcoholism. The card has become a cult collectable. Now worth \$500, it is expected to be changing hands for \$2,000 in a year's time.

You can easily discover which brand-new classic cars can be sold for instant profit by comparing newspaper car ad prices with manufacturers' list prices. The new Mercedes-Benz SLK, for example, which retails for £30,090, immediately commands a secondhand price of £40,000. The snag is that to get one you have to join the two-year waiting list that is responsible for the inflated price. What price an SLK in two years?

Bonhams' next fountain pen sale: 9 May (11am). Montblanc 0181-232 3000; Alfred Dunhill 0171-290 8600; Ulysses 0171-831 1600; Barry Roness 0181-871 2997; *Record Collector* 0181-579 1082; Lee Phelps, Energy 01503-265515.



Treasure hunt: Many items, from CDs and books through fountain pens and dealers' cards, are worth far more than their price new. But you need an eagle eye

A first edition of 'Transpotting' has soared from £4.99 to £500

A Swatch watch bought for £40 was auctioned for £18,500

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TO FIND OUT WHAT'S ON TV, WHERE TO GO AND WHEN, READ TODAY'S

inside back eye

Death and the poet and the WPC



Serena Mackesy

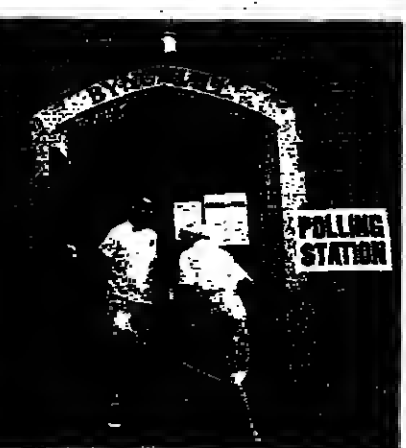
The one thing to be said for an election is that it gives you the chance to find someone new to hate. I'm quite looking forward to it

Election fever is gripping so loosely I think it might drop me altogether. Everyone seems subject to the same affliction. I haven't met anyone who can recall having had a conversation about politics in the last month. There's only so much mileage you can milk from a discussion that basically follows this pattern: "Who do you think you'll be voting for?" "Dunno, but I hate the Tories." "Me too." Eighteen years is about as far as you can string it out, though I know a number of people who have managed to stretch a loathing of socialism all the way to the half century.

The one thing to be said for an election is that it gives you the chance to find someone new to hate. I'm quite looking forward to it

I only wish someone would tell the pollsters. A day doesn't go by without the phone ringing with requests for my random opinion. The best came from the highly respected Fax Polling Associates at eight o'clock on Sunday morning. "The Referendum on Europe," announced a tinted header. Below were two boxes marked "Stay in" and "Get out", and a pair of 0331 numbers. "Please make copies of this form for everybody who wishes to express an opinion in your office," it said. Seems the Society for the Promotion of a European Referendum (302 Regent Street, if you want to drop in and ask for a refund on your fax paper), wants to determine the democratic wishes of the British people. Calls to 0331 numbers, by the way, cost £1 per minute. Can't wait for the results when they publish them "as widely as possible" before the election. Several thousand complete mugs think we should get out of Europe.

And gave us their names and addresses as well." Gallup were on the phone on Tuesday, wanting to know in whose hands I thought inflation was safest and who I thought would make the best Prime Minister. The option "me" didn't seem to be available. As a conscientious voter, I



answered the questions scrupulously, though I think I fell at the first hurdle by not knowing whether SDP has an L in it or out at the moment. But my mind wasn't really on the job. Whigs, you see, have long since been superseded by wigs on my agenda. Wigs have occupied my every waking thought since Sunday. Everywhere I go I see them now: big wigs, small wigs, partial lobe wigs, wigs that don't match the skin tone, wigs that don't match the real hair.

It's the fault of Mordechai ben David. Thanks to Mordechai, there was a gathering this week, at Wembley, with more wigs in evidence than at Elton John's birthday party. They bobbed and jiggled, they gorged popcorn and chocolate-flavoured wafer biscuits in the lobby, they watched nervously as their sons broke the strict no-fun rules imposed by the Wembley management and leapt from their seats to dance. And the arresting thing was that, in striking contrast to your average showbiz gathering, the wigs were attached to women. Mordechai ben David, you see, is the King of Hasidic music.

Ant has a bit of a crush on Mordechai, ever since she claims to have heard him sing a song called "Sephardi So Good" on Spectrum Radio. There's nothing like a good pun to get a girl's heart racing. The fact that the Great One was coming to the shores of North London sent her up to 60 a day and at least three phone calls an hour. The temptation of an evening's relief from the Hair of Dread was too powerful. We bought the last two tickets on the face of the planet.

Tenney-five pounds well spent. You can keep your sales; no one can call themselves a true Global Kid until they've bounced around with a man, with a two-foot beard and a dark suit, heels-and-toes beneath a laser show of spectacular garishness. The crowd was

in ecstasies. Politic ecstasies. Being a kid of the punk generation, I have never been at a pop concert before where everyone turned round and said "Excuse me" to the people behind them before they took to their seats. As Mordechai jiggled his way to the end of an anthem, a boy's group, decked out in white shirts and dark trousers took it up and carried it on for a full two minutes, Nick Hornby style. "I don't know why," said Mordechai, "people say that London is a quiet town these days." Not everyone, it seems, has a subscription to *Vanity Fair*.

We rehearsed foot movements all the way across the car park and treated the darkened streets of Willesden to a full-on blast of the double album. Back down south, we stopped at a 7-Eleven for more mozzarella, and a woman with a clipboard approached. "Excuse me," she said, "can I ask you a few questions about how you're going to vote in the election?" Her hair was nylon red, with rock-hard strands trained over her forehead. Ant settled down to talk about the Tories, while I walked around the back to see if I could spot a seam.

For a taboo subject, death seems to be getting talked about an awful lot just now, and not just in hushed tones and circumlocutions. Two recent radio series have been offering the chance to hear professionals in the field of mortality discussing freely and frankly the process of dying and the many processes (legal, cosmetic, sanitary) that flesh is heir to once it has given up the ghost.

On Radio 3 all this week, Thomas Lynch has been reading from his book *The Undertaking*, meditations on his twin professions of poet and mortician, both jobs that involve him intimately with death. You may not think this applies to poetry; Lynch cites Seamus Heaney, who, asked why so many of his poems were elegiac, posed the counter-question: what other kinds of poem are there?

As far as undertaking goes, it turns out that Lynch is very ambivalent about his professional status. Perhaps a certain ambivalence goes with the turf. On Monday, he began by laying out his background, explaining that he's the only undertaker in a town in Michi-



Robert Hanks

gan, with a turnover of close to a million dollars in a good year. Immediately you wonder, what does he count as a good year? Presumably 1348 would have been an excellent year in undertaker's terms, what with the Black Death, but less good by other criteria. Because he is the Grim Reaper's sole agent in the area, Lynch said, people credit him with a special knowledge of death; this he denied having. If he really had no special knowledge, of course, there'd be little point in this programme. But at the very least death is familiar to him in a way it isn't to most of us, and he has had more time and more reason to

think through its ramifications. So he does have acute things to say, some of them dismissive of death, familiarity having bred indifference, some of them moving - to analyse the sadness of the death of children without being offensively analytic or, just as bad, tritely moving is not easy, Lynch managed it.

As for his other vocation, however, that of poet, Lynch seems to have no doubts: poets are there, you gather, to dig up meanings, spot ironies, notice serendipities, and to do it all in an even tone of wearily resigned humour, sadness tempered by an appreciation of the absurdity of it all, and you do wish that he'd just let brute facts be as they are.

If you do want your death stripped of metaphysics, the place to turn is *The Coroner* (Radio 4, Wednesday). Admittedly, Susan Mitchell's documentary series does set a needlessly dramatic tone with its theme tune (mournful born over the muted wail of sirens) and John Waite being schoolmasterish - stern-yet-compassionate. But any discomfort this causes is easily

outweighed by the personalities of her two heroes: James Turnbull, 23 years a coroner for West Yorkshire, and humane in a very dry, understated way, and coroner's officer Cate Foster, a rather soft-hearted policewoman.

Each episode follows the investigation into one death - an 11-year-old boy who fell through a roof while burgling a warehouse; a DJ found dead at the bottom of a Spanish ravine, with the local authorities apparently reluctant to release any details of what may have caused it; a man who burst into flames in a hospital waiting-room. In each case, Turnbull takes it as his function to provide a story that will satisfy both the bereaved and the demands of the state.

This is death without added meaning, reduced to the bare bones of fact and grief. And it may be that radio is the only place where it can be explored so coolly and fully - where physical distress is removed, mortality disembodied. In *The Coroner* the dead are brought to life in ways that are bearable; and like any kind of resurrection, it has its miraculous side.

Taking trips down memory lane

There's no such thing as a disc jockey who doesn't want to make it on television. No matter that radio, a free-form medium that lets the roving intellect chase its own tangents, is perhaps the worst training imaginable for the strait-jacket of television. Only two Radio 1 graduates have ever really crossed the Rubicon satisfactorily - Jimmy Savile and Noel Edmonds - and they did so through programmes that mimicked the shapelessness of radio. Jonathan Coleman, heard to best effect giving it some antipodean lip on Virgin Radio, is the latest mouthy Jock to have willingly donned the small-screen gag - be gets to say about two desperately cussing things an episode on *Exclusive* (Channel 5, every week day).

Ant's *TV Favourites* (BBC1, Sat) is Steve Wright's second stab at a television career. If I could be bothered to look it up I could tell you what the first series was called; there's a dim memory of a half-baked trio-of-celebs panel show of some sort, but the rest is a blank. The new vehicle ought to be safe as houses: Wright hosts a collective saunter down television's highways and byways, of which the main drag is memory lane. A few quotes from *That's Life* here, a couple of statches of



Jasper Rees

Family Towers there. An old woman becomes the 4,972nd *EastEnders* addict to visit the set of Albert Square. Paul Whitehouse is the studio guest, affording another chance to see most of the last series of *The Fast Show*.

It's not Wright's fault that this all seems such an uninspired variation on a theme. Terry Wogan hosts another old cuttings show. Gaby Roslin has just joined the BBC to front a wish-fulfilment show called *Whatever You Want* (BBC1, Mon) that modernises the old model driven by Savile, and there have never been more venerable comedies taken out of the library and wedged into the schedules. Television's narcissistic streak, in which it serves up old programmes or programmes about old programmes, looks

uncommonly like an empty well of ideas in the light entertainment department. *Eveo* The Mrs Merton Show (BBC1, Thurs), making its maiden voyage to "The USA of America", went all that way to ask Patrick Duffy and Tony Curtis about British television presenters: "What were Richard and Judy like?" she asked Curtis, four times, because he didn't understand what she meant.

There can be no other explanation for the exhumation of *Through the Keyhole* (BBC1, each weekday). It was, let's be fair, quite a clever programme in a miserably low-brow sort of way. To be caught digging stuff out of your own dustbin is almost forgivable but God did not create the licence fee so that the Corporation could rummage through the black bags put out the backdoor by ITV. The show is still presented, most incongruously, by David Frost, who has been knighted since ITV dropped the show (for services, presumably, to the namings of breakfast cereals). One of the guests who consented to have his property exposed to the refined Bostonian taste buds of Loyd Grossman in the comeback show was Sir James Savile. But no amount of Ks can cover up for the fact that this show looks like it's trespassing, especially when the notori-

ously chaste Sir James used the guest slot to reinvent himself as a one-time-a-night Lothario. "What are you going to do next in your life?" asked the ever penetrative Sir David. "Anybody I can lay my hands on," replied Sir James.

The show is still compartmentalised into two sections, for which the commercial break was always a natural piece of punctuation. So when Frost had finished with David Wilkie and said, "I wonder who's next?" you were wondering where the ads had gone. Thanks be to Grossman, the inevitably snooty, he drops the cleverly concealed bombs into his guided tour. "What could be nicer?" he said on finding a selection of Royal Marine marches in what turned out to be Savile's record collection.

And then there's *Night Fever* (Channel 5, Sat), television's first attempt to incorporate karaoke into its fabric since, er, *Karaoke*. Dennis Potter it ain't. Suggests, formerly of Madness, invites 10 minor celebs each week to sing along and along (and along) for a full hour. The show's wittiest touch was seating Rhona Cameron, the well-known sapphist, next to Kathy Lloyd, the well-known pair of breasts. Suggests can expect his Knighthood after Channel 5 drops this garbage but before the BBC recycles it.

DAMIAN HURTS...and his painfully creative struggle

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MAN SWIMMING CAT

Whatever happened to? Lymeswold

The date 27 September 1982. The launch of a new British cheese - the first for 200 years. Sir Stephen Roberts, then head of the Milk Marketing Board, calls it the one to rescue the British dairy industry. It has a soft blue texture but a white mould rind, all the advantages of Brie with none of the downsides - smelliness, runniness, strong flavour (and foreign). Plus a name, Lymeswold, to capture the essence of Englishness.

Except it was made up by a group of Dairy Crest ad executives seeking to conjure up vanished "old wolds" where cows grazed, and the landscape was "gold"-en, "old", and, er, made of "limestone".

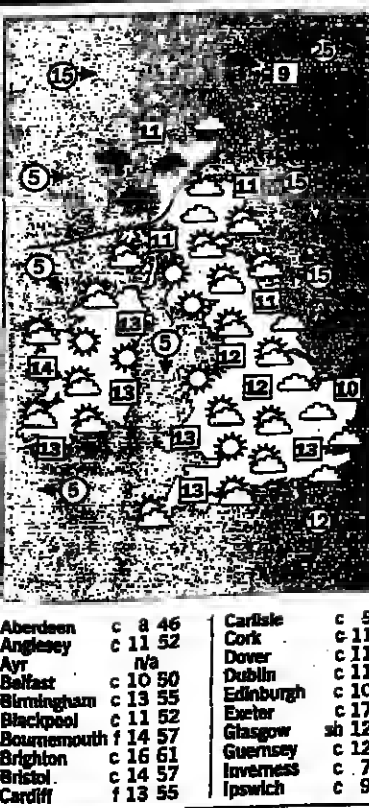
The reaction "Horrible." *The Daily Mail* is unequivocal. Experts, foodies, cheese-makers, *Private Eye* all agree. But it's a great success with the public.

Dairy Crest has to cancel a planned £2m ad budget merely to let supply catch up with demand. Matthew Bond of *The Times* deems it the triumph of marketing over maturation rates ("We were eating cheese that hadn't reached adolescence, let alone maturity"). Production is increased: from an annual 600 tonnes to 4,000 tons.

Next up Truckdown is launched in July 1997. Then Churton in February 1998, with a £3m budget. Anika Rice, and the ability, unlike Lymeswold, to be grated, melted, cooked with other foods.

James Aufenast

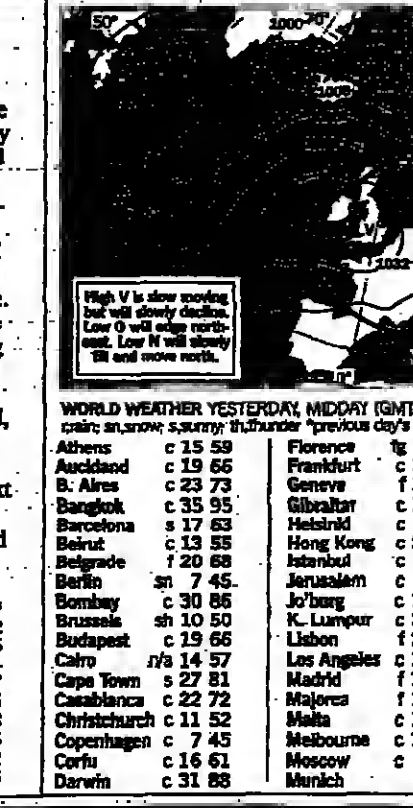
WEATHER



The British Isles

General Situation and 5-Day Outlook: Most of Scotland will have a fine day with broken clouds and some good sunny spells. However, the North-west Highlands and the outer islands will become much more cloudy with a little drizzly rain. England, Wales and Northern Ireland will have a fair day with a mix of clouds and sunny periods. The sunniest and warmest weather should be in sheltered western areas while North Sea coastal counties will be rather cool with some large banks of cloud and a sharp northerly breeze. Tomorrow, England and Wales will be fine and bright with any early frost soon clearing to leave lots of sunshine, but there will be patchy cloud in the east. Northern Ireland, together with southern and central Scotland, will also be dry and bright with some warm sunshine, but northern Scotland can expect much more cloud and some hill-drizzle. Next week the mainly dry weather will continue with more sunshine, but it will be cooler and cloudier in the north and east at times.

Europe and the World



AA Roadwatch

London, A306 Hammersmith Bridge. Closed both ways to general traffic for structural works. Expect congestion on both sides of the river. M12 Hendon area. Major roadworks at Five Ways Corner, with no access to or from the A1 Great North Way. Bristol, M5 J15-16. Counterflow in operation across the Avonmouth Bridge with a 30mph speed limit. Regular rush-hour delays. West Midlands, M6 J6. Long-term roadworks. The slip road from Salford Circus to the M6 North is closed. Diversion via Lichfield Road (A5127). M1 West Yorkshire, J47 Leeds (M52/A653 Holbeck), long-term roadworks with speed limits down to 30mph. Delays on the M1, M52 and Dewsbury Road. City of Edinburgh, M812. Major roadworks, with lane closures on the roundabout at J2 (Newbridge Spur M8). Delays possible. Aberdeen, Queen Elizabeth Bridge. Closed southbound for roadworks. Diversion via Victoria Bridge.

The Sky at Night

The star Cor Caroli is high in the sky on mid-April evenings and can be located with the help of the Plough

Lighting-up Times

Location	Time
London	7:52pm to 6:05am
Bristol	8:02pm to 6:15am
Birmingham	8:04pm to 6:17am
Manchester	8:05pm to 6:18am
Newcastle	8:06pm to 6:19am
Glasgow	8:07pm to 6:20am
Belfast	8:08pm to 6:21am

Yesterday's Readings

Location	NO ₂	SO ₂
London	Good	Good
S. England	Good	Moderate
Wales	Good	Moderate
C. England	Good	Good
N. England	Good	Good
Scotland	Good	Good
N. Ireland	Good	Good

Outlook for Today

Location	NO ₂	SO ₂
London	Good	Good
S. England	Good	Good
Wales	Good	Good
C. England	Good	Good
N. England	Good	Good
Scotland	Good	Good
N. Ireland	Good	Good

High Tide

Location	AM HT	PM HT
London	5:48 7:2 18:07 6:9	
Liverpool	3:07 9:0 15:38 12:1	
Aberdeen	11:27 12:5 23:26 12:1	
Hull (Albert Dock)	10:19 7:1 22:45 7:0	
Glasgow	4:22 3:5 16:56 3:4	
Dun Laoghaire	3:31 3:5 16:06 3:7	

Sun and Moon

Location	Sun sets	Moon sets
London	6:11pm	7:52pm
Bristol	6:12pm	7:53pm
Birmingham	6:13pm	7:54pm
Manchester	6:14pm	7:55pm
Newcastle	6:15pm	7:56pm
Glasgow	6:16pm	7:57pm
Belfast	6:17pm	7:58pm

Full moon April 22

Location	Full moon
London	April 22
Bristol	April 22
Birmingham	April 22
Manchester	April 22
Newcastle	April 22
Glasgow	April 22
Belfast	April 22

Cor Caroli

Under the tail of the Great Bear, behind its back legs, a significant patch of sky is designated as the constellation Canes Venatici - the Hunting Dogs. A 17th-century invention, this sparse constellation centres around just one moderately bright star. That star is, however, notable on several counts. It is one of the few stars with a familiar name not of ancient Arab origin: Edmond Halley, of comet fame, called it "Cor Caroli" - Charles's Heart - in honour of his patron King Charles II, and the name stuck. (Halley's other attempt to curry favour, a constellation he created called "Charles's Oak", rapidly disappeared into oblivion.) A small telescope reveals that Cor Caroli is two stars rather than one. The second magnitude white star has a fifth magnitude partner. Astrophysical studies of the brighter of the pair show it to be an extraordinary magnetic star.

Jacqueline Milton

TODAY'S TELEVISION

Tina Ogle recommends The Chest Sat 9.10pm ITV
Homicide: Life on the Streets Sat 10.30pm C4

Let's face it, if you grow up in a house with 17 toilets, there's more than a fighting chance that you'll disappear down one of them before too long. This is a probability that seems to have escaped Constant Bradley, the spoilt and violent son of a powerful Irish-American family in *A Season in Purgatory* (Sat, Sun BBC1). Expelled from school for harbouring pornographic pictures, he then proceeds to batter to death a 15-year-old girl. Does this stand in the way of his glittering political career? Of course not. The only question is, can his noble yet poor childhood friend step in to change the course of history? Occasionally chunky dialogue and missing chunks in the plot shouldn't stop you wanting to find out, in this hard-to-bate mini-series which floats past painlessly enough.

If avoiding distress is the main criterion of your weekend's viewing, then the first of three parts of *Vote Now*, Pay Later

(Sun BBC2) is to be avoided. Presented by BBC economics editor Peter Jay, this relentlessly hammers home the point that Britain's Welfare State is disappearing down the nation's plug hole. Case study after case study is wheeled out to demonstrate the widening gaps in the social structure. The message? Whoever triumphs on 1 May, whatever their pre-election promises, will find it well nigh impossible to provide us with adequate health, education and social security.

Depressed? Then cheer yourself up temporarily with a dose of *Boys' Own* baloney. The second of four offerings in ITV's Comedy Premiere season, *The Chest* (Sat, ITV) is an old-fashioned tale of buried treasure and modern-day treachery. Neil Morrissey is in typically fluffy bunny form as John Croft, a hopeless dreamer and near bankrupt who seeks redemption through Spanish gold. But it is the beautifully battered and

ridiculously talented Jim Carter who steals the show, resplendent in leather blouson as treasure hunter Roland Blood. And wonderful as he is at wounded villains, isn't it about time he got to play a romantic lead?

Those seeking love may find inspiration in *Everyman: Southampton* (Sun BBC1), a film examining the dilemmas of singles looking for a partner of the same religion. Those of us whose requirements of a mate have plummeted from dizzying Byronic heights to "must have a pulse" may be surprised at the pickiness of these particular subjects. For Susan, a fiftyish divorcee, scriptwriter and committed Christian, her man would ideally have hair, a sense of aesthetics and share her religious beliefs. As a woman from a dating agency gently points out, the prospects for women over 50 are thin. The men in this particular market are generally older and calling the tune.

But as Susan rightly retorts, she has no desire to go out with her father.

Which brings us to the beating heart of the weekend, the dramatic highlight to see you through no end of April drizzle. As *Homicide: Life on the Streets* (Sat, C4) swings confidently into its fourth series, a Sunday night in seems less like a disaster, more like good sense. Deprived of the first two episodes of this Baltimore-set police drama because of their close resemblance in detail to the Dunblane killings, we picked up last week with detective Frank Pembleton returning to work after his untimely stroke. As the satiric detective in the previous series, Andre Braugher brought charismatic intensity to wildly new levels. At the damaged shell of a man struggling to recover his pride and his career, he is simply astounding.

BBC 1

7.00 Children's BBC: Harry and the Hendersons 7.25 News, Weather (658744), 7.30 Felix the Cat 7.45 Phantom 2040, 8.10 The Real Adventures of Jonny Quest, 8.35 The Flintstones.
9.00 Live and Kicking. With special guest Robbie Williams (S) (16182314).
12.12 Weather (4318183).
12.15 Grandstand: 12.20 Football Focus (6244183), 1.05 News (T) (22566251), 1.05 Golf - US Masters (6927102), 1.40 Golf - US Masters Highlights of the second round of the US Masters from Augusta (50343299), 1.55 Racing from Ascot: the 2.00 Pegasus Handicap Hurdle (50326522), 2.10 Golf - US Masters (26054928), 2.30 Racing from Ascot: the 2.35 Kyle Stewart Handicap Steeplechase (50326522), 2.45 Golf - US Masters (6530725), 3.05 Racing from Ascot: the 3.10 Lethaby and Christopher Long Distance Hurdle Race (9436294), 3.20 Motor Sport (1646218), 3.50 Football Half-Time (9729270), 4.00 Swimming British European Finals: Action from the Ponds Forge International Sports Centre, Sheffield (5859034).
4.40 Final Score (2531725).
5.20 News, Weather (T) (8938299).
5.30 Local News, Weather (745725).
5.45 Bug Bunny (S) (503050).
5.45 Dad's Army (S) (494822).
6.15 The New Adventures of Superman (S) (671183).
7.00 Whatever You Want. La Roslin fixes it for a snowboarder to hurdle to an uncertain fate (S) (617270).
7.50 The National Lottery Live. Proving that snare is still fashionable, Bob Monkhouse presents, and Michelle Gayle sings (S) (307034).
8.10 Crime Traveller. The sumptuous Michael French continues to time-travel giddily (S) (934909).
9.00 A Season in Purgatory. See Preview, above (S) (6265589).
10.25 News, Sport, Weather (191541).
10.55 Match of the Day. Highlights including Blackburn Rovers v Man Utd (S) (8877638).
12.00 They Think It's All Over. Cult sports quiz (S) (86954).
12.30 Top of the Pops (S) (73145).
1.00 The Thing from Another World (Christian Nyby 1951, US). A space hopper descends to terrorise airmen in the North Pole in this likeable nonsense (Then Weather) (T) (2201145). To 2.30am.
REGIONS: Nil. 4.40 Final Score 5.00 - 5.20 Northern Ireland Results 5.30 - 5.35 Newsline 10.55 Match of the Day from Northern Ireland 12.30 They Think It's All Over 1.00 Top of the Pops 1.30 - 1.35 Weather. Scott 4.40 - 5.20 Afternoon Sportsline 5.30 - 5.35 Newsline 10.55 - 12.00 Sportsline - The Scottish Cup. Wales 2.30 Rugby Union Wales Cup 4.40 Final Score 4.55 - 5.20 Wales on Saturday 5.30 Wales on Saturday 6.05 - 6.15 Cartoon

BBC 2

6.20 Open University: Scotland in the Enlightenment (237305), 6.45 Light in Search of a Model (787952), 7.10 Immigration, Prejudice and Ethnicity (1062744), 8.00 Open Saturday (148222).
10.30 Turning Points (R) (3304034).
10.35 Alias Smith and Jones (R) (5912589).
11.30 Conspiracy of Hearts (Ralph Thomas 1960, UK). Local nurse in wartime Italy attempt to save orphaned Jewish children from the Nazis in this touching drama (87312251).
1.15 Film 97 with Barry Norman (R) (S) (T) (246812).
1.45 Forty-Ninth Parallel (Michael Powell 1941, UK). The first in a Powell/Pressburger double bill, this is a superb WWII propaganda picture in which six Nazi U-boat men rampage across Canada committing every crime imaginable. Leslie Howard is the star. An award-winning Best Original Story (T) (575541).
3.45 A Matter of Life and Death (Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger 1946, UK). Uneven fantasy with David Niven as an RAF pilot who miraculously escapes death, only to have an angel dispatched to reel him in (T) (595980).
5.25 The Saint. Our saviour hero finds a missing scientist (R) (2202183).
6.15 Travels with Pevensie. Gennep Greer takes a break from her inspired appearances on *Late Review* to tackle the buildings of Warwickshire. In the latest of the documentary series inspired by Nicholas Pevsner's architectural guides, Ms Greer, who taught at the University of Warwick in the 1960s, visits Badlesley Clinton Hall, Charlecote Park, Warwick Castle and others (S) (T) (666855).
7.05 Newsnight. The surreal pairing of Jeremy Paxman and Harry Enfield provides what promises to be an offbeat perspective on the general election. Selected celebrities also offer up their reports (T) (358015).
8.05 Golf - US Masters. Steve Rider introduces further coverage from Augusta. The top 65 from the first two rounds play today, and British amateur champion Warren Bladon hopes to be among them. Commentary by Peter Alliss, Alex Hay, Dave Marr and Dougie Dornally (S) (4921657).
11.00 Late Review. Mark Lawson and his team of pundits - Michael O'Donoghue, Tom Paulin - discuss the week's cultural highlights, including the controversial, Oscar-nominated film *The People vs Larry Flynt*, starring Woody Harrelson and Courtney Love (S) (686812).
11.40 Secrets (Michael Pattinson 1992, Aus/NZ). It's 1964 and for teenage Beatles fans get trapped in the basement of a hotel with an Elvis freak. Not half as much fun as it sounds, this lacks heart and pace. But look out for Noah Taylor who played the young David Helfgott in *Shine*, showing flashings of early promise (340183).
1.10 Later with Jools Holland. Jools Holland, that master of musical variety, introduces performances from Ocean Colour Scene, Tony Rich Project, Cowboy Junkies, Everclear and Ice-T (R) (977572). To 2.00am.
REGIONS: No variations

ITV

6.00 GMTV: News. 6.10 Professor Bubble. 6.30 Sonic the Hedgehog (R) (4337611). 7.15 The Wuzzles. 7.45 Disney's Wake Up in the Wild Room. 8.55 Power Rangers Zeo (6658676).
9.25 Scratchy and Co. This week's guests are ex-Coronation Street star Ken Morley and *Sticky* presenter Jez Edwards (S) (1468386).
11.30 The Chart Show (S) (40947).
12.00 Love Bites. Advice on romance, relationships and love, with guests Malcolm Jeffries and Emma Harrison from *Neighbours*. (S) (15163).
1.00 ITN News, Weather (T) (22591947).
1.05 London Weekend Today (T) (2259218).
1.10 Muthy on the Buses (Harry Booth 1972, UK). Don't bother buying a ticket for this appalling spin-off from the successful sitcom (74622909).
2.45 ITN News, Weather (T) (22591947).
3.35 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096).
4.30 ITN News, Sports Results, Weather (T) (9929980).
4.40 London Weekend Tonight (T) (1541164).
4.45 F1: Argentinian Grand Prix. Jim Rosenthal introduces the qualifying session of the Argentinian Grand Prix, live from Buenos Aires (S) (1463763).
6.10 Early Edition (S) (T) (733357).
7.05 You Bet! (S) (T) (345541).
8.05 Stars in Their Eyes. Fifteen minutes of fame impersonate Donna Summer, Frank Sinatra and Lulu (S) (T) (93182).
8.50 ITN News, Weather, Lottery Result (T) (419947).
9.05 The Chest. See Preview, above (S) (T) (8938299).
10.05 *With a Vengeance* (Michael Switzer 1992, US). Average made-for-TV fare with Melissa Gilbert-Brimman as an amnesiac nanny (T) (924980).
11.45 In Bed with Medinner (S) (739638).
12.20 Empire City (Mark Rosner 1991, US). Tedious murder and detection tale with Michael Madsen (S) (640068).
1.50 Tropical Heat (R) (S) (6414329).
2.45 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096).
3.35 Club Nation (R) (S) (7203706).
4.30 ITN Sports Classics (R) (97971752).
4.55 Night Shift (R) (S) (2358955).
5.05 Coach (S) (T) (970316).
5.30 News (26771). To 6.00am

Channel 4

6.05 Sesame Street (R) (8291305).
7.05 Sonic the Hedgehog (R) (4337611).
7.35 Dumb and Dumber (S) (4269676).
8.00 Transworld Sport (T) (25947).
9.00 Morning Line (S) (87560).
10.00 Gazzetta Football Italia (62676).
11.00 NBA 24/7 (S) (42812).
12.00 Rawhide (25560).
1.00 Lady Godiva Rides Again (Frank Launder 1951, UK). An innocent girlie winds a beauty contest but finds the road to stardom studded with sleaze bags in this thin comedy (T) (26004980).
2.45 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096).
3.35 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096).
4.30 ITN News, Sports Results, Weather (T) (9929980).
4.40 The Monkees Special. Hey, hey let's claw back some time. The *Monkees* group reunite for a "special" (6565560).
5.05 Brookside (R) (S) (T) (6565560).
6.30 Night to Day (S) (T) (657).
7.00 A Week in Politics (S) (8015).
8.00 None but the Brave (Frank Sinatra 1965, US/Japan). Of Blue Eyes' one and only film as director is a tale of personal and national American Marines and Japanese soldiers in the South Pacific of WWII. A nicely paced and intriguing morality tale (T) (8251).
10.00 Eurotrash (R) (S) (78712).
10.30 Homicide: Life on the Streets. See Preview, above (S) (T) (50164).
11.30 Hill Street Blues. More superb re-run cop stories (R) (T) (851116).
12.25 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096).
1.00 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096).
2.20 The Best of Aykroyd, Belushi and Chase (R) (2075077).
3.35 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096).
4.05 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096).
5.30 Blood, Sweat and Glory. The history of sport from cave man to modern-day Gladiators (R) (2504313). To 6.15am.

Channel 5

6.00 Dappledown Farm (5518657).
6.30 Attractions (R) (S) (6844102).
7.00 5 News Early (S) (2921947).
7.30 Hawakaze (2900454).
8.00 Alvin and the Chipmunks (2528183).
8.30 Land of the Lost (2527454).
10.50 Beverly Hills, 90210 (T) (16447893).
11.00 NBA 24/7 (S) (42812).
12.00 Rawhide (25560).
1.00 Lady Godiva Rides Again (Frank Launder 1951, UK). An innocent girlie winds a beauty contest but finds the road to stardom studded with sleaze bags in this thin comedy (T) (26004980).
2.45 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096).
3.35 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096).
4.30 ITN News, Sports Results, Weather (T) (9929980).
4.40 The Monkees Special. Hey, hey let's claw back some time. The *Monkees* group reunite for a "special" (6565560).
5.05 Brookside (R) (S) (T) (6565560).
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11.30 Hill Street Blues. More superb re-run cop stories (R) (T) (851116).
12.25 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096).
1.00 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096).
2.20 The Best of Aykroyd, Belushi and Chase (R) (2075077).
3.35 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096).
4.05 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096).
5.30 Blood, Sweat and Glory. The history of sport from cave man to modern-day Gladiators (R) (2504313). To 6.15am.

ITV/Regions

As London except: 12.30pm Movies, Games and Videos (15183). 1.05 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096). 1.10 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096). 1.15 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096). 1.20 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096). 1.25 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096). 1.30 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096). 1.35 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096). 1.40 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096). 1.45 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096). 1.50 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096). 1.55 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096). 2.00 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096). 2.05 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096). 2.10 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096). 2.15 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096). 2.20 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096). 2.25 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096). 2.30 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096). 2.35 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096). 2.40 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096). 2.45 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096). 2.50 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096). 2.55 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096). 3.00 *seeQuest* DSV (S) (T) (6637096). 3.05 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